

Post-war Regimes and State Reconstruction in Liberia and Sierra Leone



Amadu Sessay
Charles Ukeje
Osman Gbla
Olawale Ismail

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AND STATE RECONSTRUCTION
IN LIBERIA AND SIERRA LEONE

Amadu Sesay
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Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa

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Contents

Notes on Authors	v
List of Tables	vii
List of Figures	viii
Abbreviations	ix

Chapter 1

Post-war Regimes and State Reconstruction: A Framework for Analysis and Comparative Experience

Introduction	1
The Power Elite Factor in Post-war Reconstruction: A Framework for Analysis	4
Conceptual Issues in Post-war Reconstruction	6
Post-war Reconstruction: A New Phenomenon?	8
A Case for Comparative Research on Post-war Reconstruction in Africa	10
A Critique of Theory and Practice in Post-war Reconstruction in Africa	12

Chapter 2

State Collapse and Civil Wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone

Introduction	19
Political Manipulation, Economic Mismanagement and State Collapse in Liberia	20
Sierra Leone: Democratic Misadventures, Civil Wars and Good-bye to Innocence	26

Chapter 3

Regime Types and Post-war Reconstruction in Liberia

Introduction	35
Charles Taylor's Electoral Victory, Post-war Reconstruction and Peace Building in Liberia	37
Villain or Statesman? Charles Taylor and the International Community	42
Luring a Drunken Man Out of a China Shop: Charles Taylor's Exile and Its Effects on Post-war Reconstruction in Liberia	44
Liberia's Transitional Government: Post-war Reconstruction in Limbo?	46
Beyond October 2005: Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and the Future of Liberia	46

Chapter 4**Regime Types and Post-war Reconstruction in Sierra Leone**

Tejan Kabbah and Post-war Reconstruction in Sierra Leone	55
A Brief Assessment of Tejan Kabbah's Presidency	58
Agents or Obstacles to National Reconciliation? The Special Court and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Sierra Leone	62
The Youth Problem in Post-war Reconstruction	69
The Anti-corruption Campaign and Post-war Reconstruction	71

Chapter 5**Post-war Regimes and Reconstruction: Analysis of Empirical Data
from Liberia and Sierra Leone**

Distribution of Respondents by Location	75
Socio-economic Characteristics of Respondents	75
Major Causes of the Civil Wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone	77
Perceptions of the Peace Processes and the Effects on Post-war Reconstruction in Liberia and Sierra Leone	79
Post-war Regimes, the International Community and Donor Agencies in Liberia and Sierra Leone	84
Obstacles to Post-war Reconstruction in Liberia and Sierra Leone	86
The Future of Post-war Reconstruction in Liberia and Sierra Leone	90

Chapter 6

Conclusion	97
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Notes	101
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Bibliography	105
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Notes on Authors

Amadu Sesay, Professor of International Relations at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, attended the London School of Economics and Political Science. He was Director of the CODESRIA Child and Youth Institute in 2003; Claude Ake Visiting Professor, Department of Peace and Conflict Research, University of Uppsala, 2005; and Visiting Professor, Centre d'Etudes Afrique Noire, Bordeaux, October-November 2006. Professor Sesay headed the Department of International Relations, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, from July 2000 to August 2006. His research interests include African politics, security and conflict studies and he has authored several books, monographs, book chapters and journal articles in these areas. His most recent publications are: *Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation and Collection in the Niger Delta, Nigeria* (2006), edited with Antonia Simbine, and *Does One Size Fit All? The Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission Revisited* (Nordic Africa Institute 2007).

Charles Ukeje is a Reader in International Relations at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. He won the Mary Kingsley Zochonis Lecture Award of the Royal African Society in 2004 and, the following year, was the Leventis Cooperation Visiting Research Scholar at the Centre for African Studies, SOAS, UK. He was on sabbatical, from September 2007, as Lecturer in African Politics and Development at the Department of International Development, Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford. His most recent major work is a co-edited book titled *The Crisis of the State and Regionalism in West Africa: Identity, Citizenship and Conflict* (CODESRIA 2005).

Osman Gbla holds a doctorate from Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone, where he also served as Head of the Department of Political Science and Acting Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law. He is also the founder of the Centre for Development and Security Analysis (CEDSA) in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Dr Gbla was one of the lead consultants that prepared the Sierra Leone Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and the Sierra Leone Vision 2025. His research interests include conflict and post-conflict peace building, governance, regional security and security sector reform, focusing

especially on West Africa. He has published extensively in these areas and is a member of many research networks, including the Nordic Africa Institute Programme on Post-Conflict Transitions in Africa, and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) project on Military Expenditures.

Olawale Ismail recently earned a doctorate from the Department of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford, UK, after receiving a Masters degree in International Relations from Cambridge University (2001) and a Bachelors degree from Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria (1999). He is currently a Research Associate of the Project on Youth Vulnerability and Exclusion in Africa with the Conflict, Security and Development Group, International Policy Institute at King's College, London. Dr. Ismail's research interests and expertise include DDR and post-war reconstruction, security sector reform, youth and child soldiers, political violence and terrorism, conflict and security analysis, and military expenditure.

List of Tables

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Age	76
Table 2: Major Causes of the Civil Wars	79
Table 3: Respondents' Perceptions of the Peace Processes	80
Table 4: Major Shortcomings of the Peace Processes	81
Table 5: Perceived Effects of Post-war Regimes on Reconstruction in Liberia and Sierra Leone	82
Table 6: Capacity of the Governments of Liberia and Sierra Leone to Address Post-war Reconstruction Challenges	83
Table 7: Outcomes of Post-war Reconstruction Efforts	84
Table 8: Obstacles to Post-war Reconstruction	87
Table 9: Impediments to the Full Implementation of Post-war Reconstruction Programmes	88
Table 10: Perceived Positive Aspects of Postwar Reconstruction Process	89
Table 11: Perceived Negative Aspects of Post-war Reconstruction Process	90
Table 12: The Futures of Post-war Reconstruction in Liberia and Sierra Leone	91
Table 13: Perceptions of the Role of the Governments of Liberia and Sierra Leone in Post-war Reconstruction Processes	92
Table 14: Perceptions of the Role of Religious Groups in Post-war Reconstruction in Liberia and Sierra Leone	93
Table 15: Perceptions of the Role of Civil Society in Post-war Reconstruction in Liberia and Sierra Leone	94
Table 16: Perceptions of the Roles of International NGOs and Donor Agencies in Postwar Reconstruction in Liberia and Sierra Leone	95
Table 17: Perceptions of the Role of the United Nations in Post-war Reconstruction in Liberia and Sierra Leone	96
Table 18: Perceptions of the Role of the International community in Post-war Reconstruction	96

List of Figures

Figure 1: Distribution of Respondents by Location.....	75
Figure 2: Distribution of Respondents by Sex	76
Figure 3: The Relationships between the Two Governments and Donor Agencies	85
Figure 4: The Relationships between the Two Governments and the International Community	86

Abbreviations

AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia
AFRC	Armed Forces Ruling Council
AFRSL	Armed Forces of the Republic of Sierra Leone
ALCOP	All Liberian Coalition Party
APC	All Peoples' Congress
AU	African Union
CDC	Congress for Democratic Change
CDF	Civil Defense Forces
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
COTOL	Coalition for Transformation of Liberia
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
D.C.	District of Columbia
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
DDRR	Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration and Rehabilitation
DFID	Department for International Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FIDH	Officials of Foreign Missions, International Institutions, Donor and Humanitarian Agencies
FOPPAL	Forum for Political Party Leaders
GAC	General Auditing Commission
GO	Government Official
GOSL	Government of Sierra Leone
GSA	General Services Agency
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
IMATT	International Military Advisory Training Team
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPRSP	Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
LP	Liberty Party
LPP	Liberian People's Party
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
MODEL	Movement for Democracy in Liberia

MOJA	Movement for Justice in Africa
NACSA	National Commission for Social Action
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NCDDR	National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
NDPL	National Democratic Party of Liberia
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
NPP	National Patriotic Party
NPRC	National Provisional Ruling Council
NTGL	National Transitional Government of Liberia
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
ONS	Office of National Security
OLCS	Opinion Leaders and Civil Society
PAL	Progressive Alliance of Liberia
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
QUAP	Quick Action Programme
RAP	Reformation Alliance Party
RRR	Resettlement, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
TWP	True Whig Party
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UP	Unity Party
UPP	United People's Party
US	United States
WPTO	Warsaw Pact Treaty Organisation

Post-war Regimes and State Reconstruction: A Framework for Analysis and Comparative Experiences

Introduction

The shocks of the unexpected eruption of internal armed conflicts in post-Cold War West Africa continue to linger in policy and academic circles. This is particularly evident in the relative lack of well-grounded theorization and robust academic debates on the different aspects and overall dynamics of the post-war reconstruction agenda in Africa. It is therefore an area where African and Africanist scholars have almost surrendered to the dictates of international organizations, international financial and aid agencies and, lastly, non-governmental organizations. Whereas considerable attention has been devoted to explaining the outbreak of civil wars (Abdullah 2004; Collier and Hoeffler 2001; Herbst 1990; Reno 1998; Richards 1996),¹ there is still a disproportionately poor understanding of the processes and implementation of post-war reconstruction agenda in Africa. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that a good understanding of the etiology of civil wars is critical to early cessation of hostilities, and in preventing a possible relapse. It is against this background that this study interrogates the contemporary post-war reconstruction agenda and practices in Africa by focusing on two West African countries, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Disturbingly, recent policy debates and actions across the continent have tended to either underestimate or relegate to the background issues connected to the social agency of political actors, notably power elites, and the character of regimes, even when it is realized that new forms of conflict in Africa are essentially about the intractability of the struggle for power, pursued by every available means (Ake 2000a; Yannis 2003). Conversely, the rebuilding of institutions, through simultaneous reforms in the economic, political and security sectors, is seen 'optimistically' as the only route to 'rescuing' Africa from its seemingly vicious cycle of civil conflicts, state collapse and underdevelopment. Although this growing

tide of institutional optimism is important for the security and stability of those African states that are emerging from protracted civil conflicts and wars, it represents far less optimism under closer scrutiny and in practice. Theoretically, post-war transformation represents a rare window of opportunity to rebuild failed state institutions and society and to avoid the pitfalls of the past. At one level, therefore, it is an opportunity to implant 'real' or institutional democracy, as is often the case, and minimize dissent among rival power elites.

In practice, however, rebuilding societies and states in post-war countries raises far more troubling questions than answers, especially in view of the inability of previous political successions and reconfigurations in Africa, to bring about desired changes in the character of political leadership (Chabal and Daloz 1999). The arguments made in this study are thus threefold. First, is to contend that state-of-the-art post-war reconstruction agenda in Africa are plagued by serious theoretical, organizational and practical inadequacies. Second, regardless of whatever optimism may prevail about rebuilding institutions and institutionalism, managing or transforming the underlying socio-political agency of power elites and regime character, is central to the understanding and resolution of the socio-economic, political and developmental problems being experienced by many, if not all countries, across sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Third, given the fact that the nature of elite conflict and competition precipitates and accentuates a majority of the civil conflicts in SSA, successful post-war reconstruction agenda must necessarily reflect upon, and if need be, tinker with the composition and nature of power elite interactions in the affected state(s). The failure to do so has left post-conflict societies in SSA highly vulnerable to a relapse into new rounds of conflict or at least a continuation of pre-war and wartime practices, including non-formal state activities, e.g., illegal and indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources. As such, there is an urgent need for empirically grounded and in-depth comparative research on post-war reconstruction in Africa and elsewhere, so as to generate and contrast cross-country experiences. This is with a view to enriching the understanding of the content and context of post-war reconstruction efforts as well as the myriad and daunting challenges they present. In the particular context of Africa, the imperative for cross-national comparative research cannot be devalued in view of the important geographical, socio-economic, historical and political ties that link the diverse conflicts in the different regions.

The present study acknowledges the complexities of post-war reconstruction, given the different dimensions, actors, sectors and phases involved. As such, an exhaustive analysis of the various components and complexities associated with post-war reconstruction in Liberia and Sierra Leone is outside the remit of this study. Instead, we delimit our analysis by focusing on the crucial role of power elites and elitism in the onset, as well as the trajectories and outcomes of their post-conflict rebuilding agenda. While there are considerable theoretical and

empirical works on the general character of African post-colonial elites (Ake 1981, 1985, 2000b; Bayart 1993; Bayart and Ellis 1999; Ekeh 1975, 1983; Geschiere 1997, 1982; Mamdani 1996, 2002; Mbembe 2001; Mazrui 2005), we limit our focus, without totally discounting insights from these works, to the less evident nexus between power elites (or perhaps more appropriately, civil war-making elites), peace processes and post-war reconstruction processes in SSA, using Liberia and Sierra Leone as case studies.

We also acknowledge the possibility of strong theoretical connections between the contemporary power (civil war-making) elites and those of the immediate post-independence era, not least through the maintenance of similar recruitment, acculturation, circulation and operational mechanisms within the power elite circle. Mamdani's '*citizen and subject*' categorization, for instance, mirrors the kinds of native-settler divide that defines elitism and access to power in both Liberia (between minority Americo-Liberians and indigenous Liberians) and Sierra Leone (between Creole and indigenous groups). We engage with contemporary power-elites and post-war reconstruction agenda so as to remain faithful to our underlying subject matter. Such an approach allows us to capture a tiny but invaluable portion, as opposed to an ambiguous whole, of reality in relation to the two concepts of power elites and post-war reconstruction. Borrowing from the much-criticized Waltzian neo-realist logic, we seek to interrogate post-war reconstruction programmes using the power elite variable, while holding other components, or determinants 'constant'. Moreover, examining the power elite and post-war reconstruction interface helps in locating the research within a more empirical, contemporary, yet evolving context, as opposed to one of excessive theorization, especially on power elites in Africa. This approach equally provides the study a clear focus by fashioning a manageable research problem and question, and facilitating simple and coherent analyses.

Investigating the interface of power elites or regime character, the nature of post-war regimes and the pattern and dynamics of post-war reconstruction, is important for at least five reasons. First, without a long-term, holistic understanding of the political, economic and social well-being of Bayart's (1993: 167) 'little people' or Ng'ethe's (1995) 'strongmen', the likelihood that external donor support can prevent the recurrence of future conflicts is slim (Forman 2002). Second, the simultaneity and pace of socio-economic and political restructuring in Africa is conditioned not only by democratization, neo-liberalism and globalization, but also, potentially at least, by war and post-war complexities in which power elites play decisive roles. Consequently, the numerous cases of catalytic conflicts in Africa not only make 'force' the major currency of social and political transactions and transformation, but also give the power of civil (dis)order to warlords (Chabal and Daloz 1999). Third, it is imperative to understand the changes and continuities associated with pre-war, wartime and post-war contexts

and practices in Africa, not the least in order to escape a self-fulfilling but vicious cycle of institutionalized decay and self-regenerating conflicts (Ibid.). Fourth, and at a broader level, the present study is an important contribution to the unresolved problem of how best to transform pseudo-statehood into real statehood in Africa after the grim failures of the past (Milliken and Krause 2003). Fifth, granted that conflicts and post-conflict reconstruction processes are integral state reconfiguration exercises in an emerging global order (Doornbos 2003), it is important, all the same, to understand the internal dynamics of the 'new order'. Understanding the kind of state being reconstituted (Yannis 2003), therefore, requires a critical analysis and insights into how power elites and regimes interpret and play pivotal roles in peace deals and reconstruction processes, and the sustainability of peace and security in post-war countries.

The remainder of this chapter operationalises the phenomenon of post-war reconstruction, followed by a section on the power elite factor in post-war reconstruction in Africa. The third part demonstrates how contemporary post-war reconstruction initiatives differ from similar post-conflict rebuilding exercises in the pre-1990 years by highlighting the utility of comparative research in this field. The fourth section provides the background to post-war reconstruction in Africa by examining the linkages between events and actors, especially political elites, in the pre-war and war periods, and the challenges they provoke in terms of post-war reconstruction. The fifth section engages with the general critique of the theory and practice of contemporary post-war reconstruction in Africa, while the final section presents a schema for the rest of the book.

The Power Elite Factor in Post-war Reconstruction:

A Framework for Analysis

Since Liberia set the trail of civil wars and associated instabilities in Africa in December 1989, over twenty other cases have been recorded from the 1990s to date. Several attempts to explain the upsurge in such civil wars have generated perspectives such as Collier's 'greed and grievance' thesis, 'eco-violence' theories (Homer-Dixon and Percival 1998: 279-298; Homer-Dixon 1991: 76-116), and the age-old ethnicity explanation, among others. Within this broad spectrum, only the 'greed and grievance' and the ethnicity arguments offer a direct, nonetheless controversial, account of the role of elites and elitism in Africa's civil wars (Chazan 1999). According to Collier, economic agenda or profit making incentives and processes are the most important indices and causes of political violence in Africa in the post-Cold War era. The economic agenda captured by the greed model displaces the more popular notions of social injustice, disempowerment and ethno-linguistic marginalization as captured by the grievance model as the major causes of civil conflicts. The model presents civil wars as an opportunity to exploit lootable primary resources as a key factor underlying the involvement of

actors, most especially power elites, in the intractable political instabilities in the African continent (Collier 2000; Collier and Hoeffler 2003). Collier concludes that the true cause and course of political violence is not the loud discourse on grievance, but the silent force of greed (2000: 100). On the other hand, the ethnicity or identity argument stresses the importance of particularities and differences, underscored by the prevalence of ethnically-centered mobilization and militarization in the outbreak and prolongation of political violence. For those persuaded along the later lines, power elites are believed to be the arrowhead of such mobilization of identity. Hence, the instrumentalist perspective of ethnicity pinpoints it as a strategy of political mobilization manipulated by political elites for their selfish political ends (Safa and Du Toit 1996: 176-180).

Accordingly, Collier's emphasis on the underlining opportunities for economic enrichment by war-making elites reifies the earlier contention by Clapham (1998) that rebel, ethno-political and ethno-religious military movements across Africa, are neither revolutionary nor do they have any radical agenda different from those held by incumbents of power whom they seek to unseat. Collier (2004) has unexpectedly revised his earlier assumptions and claims, in part because of the scathing criticisms that drew critical attention to the social justice component of civil conflicts. Despite its shortcomings, the greed thesis clearly draws attention to the importance, if not the centrality, of rent-seeking activities and the robust informal or 'black' market in mineral resources exploitation and exportation in civil wars, and how preventing trade in lootable resources remains vital to the early and durable resolution of civil conflicts in Africa. Significantly, most civil wars in SSA mirror Reno's 'warlord politics' (1998: 80-95) to the extent that prebendal accumulation and shadow state logic are incubated and intensified during such wars. From Charles Taylor in Liberia to Foday Sankoh in Sierra Leone and Laurent Kabila in the Democratic Republic of Congo, DRC, the wartime accumulation strategies of these warlords mirror the pre-war accumulation patterns in Doe's Liberia, Steven's and Momoh's Sierra Leone and Mobutu's Zaire. Essentially, these include: pawning state assets in areas of occupation; the licensing of private corporations to exploit natural resources (wood, diamonds, oil, iron ore and other mineral resources) from which rents in the form of cash and equipment (including weapons) are obtained; and the charging of fees for protection and right of passage (especially of transportation facilities) by foreign private companies and international aid and humanitarian agencies.

Similarly, the nature of politics and political power has been highlighted as a central index of the propensity for, and actual outbreak, of civil wars in Africa. It is contended that power — the struggle for it, its monopolization by an individual or a group and the subsequent refusal to relinquish or share it — usually presages state implosion. This is hardly surprising given that politics constitute the major gateway to material wealth and the construction of social and political

hegemonies across SSA. Bayart notes that it is the movement towards exclusion as opposed to inclusion, and divergence as against convergence and compromise (Bayart 1993: 153) as well as the failure to achieve minimal hegemony (Moore 1991: 474-475) among political elites, that account for the outbreak of civil wars. Hence, 'more often than not, the elites' struggles for exclusion and incorporation spill over and engulf the rest of the society' (Ake 2000a: 39). This peculiar nature of African politics rests on an over-politicized, pseudo-capitalist foundation characterized by the absence of structural capitalist implantation (Sangmpam 1993; Ake 2000a).

Consequently, power elites, either incumbents or those in opposition, are central to state collapse and the outbreak and elongation of civil conflicts, just as they exercise considerable clout on the tempo and terms of peace negotiations. More importantly, there appears to be significant linkages and continuities between the identity and character of pre-war, wartime and post-war successor elites in many African countries. From such a standpoint, several questions beg for answers: how do these realities impact on the content, context and process of post-war reconstruction? Are power elites, especially in Liberia and Sierra Leone, easily brought into the opportunism of statesmanship and commitment to undertaking genuine reconciliation and peace building in the immediate post-war era? Or, do they carry on with business as usual, hardly differentiating between warlordism and statesmanship? More importantly, how does the broader, international perception of the post-war power elite and regime character influence the direction of international public opinion, goodwill and commitments (technical, material and financial) badly needed for rapid and successful post-war recovery programmes in war-torn societies?

In subsequent chapters, we investigate the peculiar reality in the two case studies, Liberia and Sierra Leone, in order to test, among other assumptions, the pessimism by Herbst (1990) that there is very little reason to conclude that the civil wars in Africa will have the same consensual and state-building effects (Musah 2003; Tilly 1985). Here, we offer a critical evaluation of the theory and practice of post-war reconstruction in Africa with a view to generating appropriate insights into how they are constructed and conditioned by the character of different regimes and power elites.

Conceptual Issues in Post-war Reconstruction

In general, post-war reconstruction involves the rebuilding of the socio-economic framework of society, and reconfiguring the enabling conditions for a better functioning peacetime society, using the framework of transparent governance and the rule of law (World Bank 1998). However, logical objections can be raised on the extent to which the process is actually 'post' war, given that such societies are often over-burdened by widespread human rights violations and tenuous peace agreements (Addison 2003). As Addison (2003) contends, post-

war reconstruction emphasizes physical rebuilding of infrastructure, whereas the task at hand incorporates social re-engineering and rebuilding, what Putnam classified as positive social capital. In addition, the elastic nature of most contemporary wars makes them less of single events with clear beginnings and endings, but rather of broader processes of social change that are turbulent and discontinuous, resulting from several contingent factors (Goodhand and Hulme 1999: 23). Also, there remains considerable doubt about the immediate and long-term transition from the 'protest identity' (Goldstone 2001: 153) formed by a majority of wartime actors or combatants, to the 'nationalistic' or 'peace' identities that are required for sustainable post-war recovery.

Accordingly, post-war reconstruction is conceptually tied to wider processes of peace building, marked as activities undertaken for the purpose of preventing, alleviating or resolving violent or potentially violent conflicts. It is also designed to reverse the destructive processes (negative social capital) that accompany prolonged violence; processes that occur before, during and after conflicts, and are a whole range of activities defined by the outcomes of civil wars (Steadman et. al. 2002: 4). Such a conceptual operationalization vitiates concerns about the timing and physical limitations associated with post-war reconstruction, as opposed to total rebuilding or transformation of peace building; it incorporates local actors, as opposed to suggesting that external actors alone are entrusted with the difficult task of rebuilding failed states; and finally, such a conceptual focus tends to carry less historical baggage (Hamre and Sullivan 2002: 3).

In general, recent post-war reconstruction agenda in Africa is anchored on four pillars: first, *security sector reforms* guarantee personal (human) and territorial security, indexed by targeted activities such as the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of former fighters; rebuilding and retraining the armed forces and the police; reviewing and formulating a new national defense doctrine and policy; and improving civil and democratic oversight and control of security institutions and personnel. Second, *justice and reconciliation* promote social healing, limit dissent and enhance recourse to non-violent means in the resolution of conflicts. These aspects are signposted by reform of the judicial and penal systems, and the setting up of a truth commission, and perhaps, a war crimes tribunal. Third, *socio-economic reforms* address fundamental needs such as employment, emergency relief, restoring essential services, and re-laying the economic foundation for growth and development. This phase could also witness the liberalization and privatization of state-owned assets. The fourth pillar, *political reform* promotes good governance, rule of law and political participation through elections after the peace accords, the rebuilding of political institutions, the creation of legitimate and effective political and administrative systems and the involvement of civil society in governance processes (Ibid.).

In addition to Addison's (2003) tripartite actors — local communities, the private sector and the state under reconstruction — it is important to acknowl-

edge a fourth key player in post-war reconstruction efforts: the international community, comprising international organizations (United Nations, European Union, African Union and sub-regional groupings), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international aid and financial agencies. Forman (2002: 129) summarizes the importance of post-war reconstruction as creating governing systems that are predictable and impartial, establishing the economic rules for development, and creating a judicial system that can uphold contractual obligations, protect property rights and guarantee that commercial interests have a process that produces reliable and enforceable outcomes.

Another major component of current post-war reconstruction is the frequent use of special conferences or donor conferences to mobilize international political, diplomatic and financial support for peace processes, and to harmonize differing perspectives among key external actors (Addison 2003). Accordingly, post-war reconstruction is implemented by a consortium of agencies: international organizations, international aid agencies, international and local NGOs (acting as sub-contractors and executors for Western NGOs) and favoured or cooperative political elites. This last point brings out the final component of post-war reconstruction: they tend to be largely driven from outside. In other words, external actors tend to dominate the designing, financing and implementation of reconstruction programmes in countries emerging from civil wars. Indeed, there is considerable evidence of externalization, in spite of the professed objective of promoting local ownership, building domestic capacity and adapting programmes and resources to suit local capacities. The retinue of highly remunerated experts, technocrats, consultants and contractors involved in economic, political, institutional and security reforms and in the delivery of psychosocial therapy, are good examples of this phenomenon.

This externalization is not new per se. Historically, for instance, the US played a central role, alongside monopoly capital from North America, in the post-World War II reconstruction of Europe. What is new about contemporary externalization of post-war efforts, however, is the sheer scale of such involvement, and also its impository nature. The unavoidability of externalization in the post-1990 era is reinforced, especially for Africa, by the scarcity of indigenous funds, and sometimes even human resources for reconstruction, and the structure and processes of international relations that concentrate human and material resources and expertise, even those originally from Africa, in the affluent North.

Post-war Reconstruction: A New Phenomenon?

In this section, we argue that contemporary post-war reconstruction, defined by the former Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, as 'actions undertaken at the end of a conflict to consolidate peace and prevent a reoccurrence of armed confrontation' (United Nations 1998), is a relatively new concept in policy and academic circles, at least in Africa. Its newness is underscored by the

scope and upsurge in armed conflicts in SSA for much of the 1990s, with the continent playing host to at least sixteen out of the thirty-three global intra-state conflicts as recently as 1999 (Addison and Murshed 2001: 1). Although armed conflicts, including civil wars, liberation wars and inter-state wars, are not new to Africa, the scale and simultaneity of human and material casualties often spilling across national borders, and the attendant near or total destruction of the conventional socio-economic and political fabric of societies are unprecedented. Although pre-1990 theatres of conflict also left behind substantial human and material destruction of tragic proportions, crucially, they were mostly external rather than localized within states. Besides, pre-1990 conflicts in Africa were aimed at crippling the war capabilities of belligerents, as opposed to the more destructive, 'anything-everything' philosophy that has marked recent civil wars in the continent.

Recent post-war reconstruction efforts, especially in Africa, stem from Kaldor's (2001) 'new wars' in sharp contrast to the inter-state conflicts that marked pre-1990 post-war reconstruction initiatives. What this suggests is that the geography or environment of recent post-war reconstruction has also been significantly altered, shifting from the more industrially developed and militarily powerful states and regions of the world to the less powerful, less industrialized, less developed and militarily weak states and regions. This transposition reflects fundamental changes in the structure and geography of warfare, with a seeming trade-off between inter-state and intra-state conflict, as conflicts become more 'affordable' to the poorer countries and regions of the world. Thus, while Western European states — Britain, Germany, France, Poland and Italy — were the major theatres of early twentieth century post-war reconstruction, the poorer Third World countries, especially those in Africa — Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, DRC, Liberia, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, etc. — are either current or potential theatres of post-war reconstruction.

Again, the ongoing post-war reconstruction programmes are generally localized (that is, less tied to calculations about international security and inter-state commercial and geo-strategic interests) when compared to the earlier models. For instance, post-World Wars I and II reconstruction plans were essentially internationalist in outlook, seeking to link international security issues such as the demilitarization of certain countries, the imposition of reparations on vanquished countries as a deterrence against future aggression, and the outright partitioning of some countries, with post-war reconstruction efforts. Conversely, post-Cold War reconstruction initiatives in Africa and elsewhere have been much more targeted (in part due to their intra-state as opposed to inter-state nature), seeking essentially to maintain the mythology of statehood rather than overseeing the partitioning or break-up of the affected countries. Furthermore, they are less tied to the international geo-political and diplomatic dynamics of the kinds during the previous epochs.

Finally, the pre-1990 reconstruction agenda was more economic in character, emphasizing how to transform wartime production capacities into efficient industrial complexes after the end of hostilities. Not surprisingly, the pre-1990 reconstruction agenda generated intense ideological debate about the best economic framework for post-war reconstruction: Keynesianism, Liberalism and Monetarism (Papi 1947). At the epicenter of the debate was whether the inherent profit-making motive of the capitalist system could ever be reconciled with the growing demands of welfarism and active state interventions in the economic sector (Bain 1944: 704). Pre-1990 post-war reconstruction was also driven by the active involvement of international monopoly capital, given its goal of a quick and definitive return to the pre-war status quo of healthy economic and financial systems conducive to profitable money-lending business, especially to the defeated powers (Henry 1942). Evidently, there is little or no ideological debate about the hollow socio-economic and political logic behind the more recent post-war reconstruction efforts in Africa, at least.

A Case for Comparative Research on Post-war Reconstruction in Africa

The dearth of major empirical research into the theory and practice of post-war reconstruction in Africa has already been noted. To this, we add the absence of comparative research into how post-war societies cope with the task of rebuilding social, economic, environmental and political institutions, processes and practices after civil wars (Adediji 1999; International Crisis Group 2004).² What are the relative advantages of comparative research over single country case studies on post-war reconstruction in Africa? Providing answers to this question is as difficult as the enormous challenges faced by the peoples and governments of countries emerging from prolonged armed conflicts. The task of comparative research on post-war reconstruction is made even more difficult by the tendency to make hasty generalizations about such events or processes. Still, comparative research on post-war reconstruction is not about generalizations. Rather, it is an attempt to see areas of convergence and divergence and how different and similar experiences impose contrasting challenges on post-war reconstruction agenda and contexts. In fact, the rationale for comparative research on post-war reconstruction derives from both the structural and procedural changes, and perhaps uniqueness, of post-Cold War armed conflicts in Africa. Consequently, we argue for at least five important advantages (and justifications) deriving from undertaking comparative research on post-war reconstruction in Africa.

The first advantage is that comparative research enables academics and policy makers to compare and contrast wartime experiences, on the one hand, and the different and similar challenges they pose to the design and implementation of the post-war reconstruction agenda, on the other. Through such an approach, it is possible to delineate the least common denominators across different theatres of

armed conflict and post-war reconstruction initiatives. In other words, the comparative approach also allows for the investigation of differences in social and governmental institutions and processes in the run-up to and during civil wars, and how these differences impact on post-war reconstruction outcomes. Second, the structural and geographical linkages that characterize most, if not all, armed conflicts in post-Cold War Africa are also a compelling rationale for comparative research on post-war reconstruction. Post-1990 armed conflicts in the continent, starting with Liberia, are generally internal with major so-called contagion or spillover effects in neighbouring states. Sometimes, these conflicts draw regional states into an enlarged theatre of military and politico-diplomatic confrontations (for instance, Liberia and Sierra Leone in the Mano River Basin, and the Democratic Republic of Congo in the Great Lakes). This is apart from the often crosscutting colonial experiences, ethnic composition, institutional similarities and common political undercurrents, such as the experience of one-party or military dictatorships and neo-patrimonial politics.

On Liberia and Sierra Leone, specifically, Clapham (1976) lays the foundation for comparison, in part, by arguing that the two countries have so much in common that it is plausible to suppose that the experience of one may help illuminate the other. He contends that these countries share the peculiar legacies of 'Creoleldom', analogous administrative hierarchies, the distribution of educational and professional skills, and similar economies, based principally on the export of primary resources, especially minerals. In addition, wartime dynamics are similarly marked by the indiscriminate targeting of civilians and the use of child soldiers, massive displacement of the population, use of small arms and light weapons, the five-year average duration of the two civil wars, and finally, the protracted nature of virtually all of the armed conflicts in the continent. The wartime dynamics require deeper investigation into the different and similar challenges imposed on post-war reconstruction processes and emergent regimes in the affected states. This is why the two countries are consequently described as 'twins but not identical' in this study.

Third, given the present dearth of literature on the subject matter and its relative newness, especially in relation to Africa, comparative research becomes a valuable step in building a catalogue of cross-national and cross-regional experiences in the theory and practice of post-war reconstruction. Are there, for instance, similarities and differences between post-war reconstruction regimes in Mozambique and Sierra Leone? What similar and different challenges can we begin to envisage for a possible post-war reconstruction regime in Cote d'Ivoire, given the experiences of countries like Mozambique, Liberia, Sierra Leone or Angola? How does the post-war reconstruction agenda in Eritrea, for instance, differ from that of Ethiopia, given the essentially inter-state nature of the conflict,

and differ in relation to that in Liberia or Angola? Clearly, it is only through comparative research that meaningful answers can be provided to these important questions.

Fourth, by undertaking comparative research on countries like Liberia and Sierra Leone, critical lessons learnt from failures and successes can begin to serve as a benchmark for future peace agreements. When such experiences are eventually incorporated into the initial planning of post-war reconstruction programmes, it becomes easier to avoid and avert the disasters that usually attend the ad-hoc, trial and error approaches to recent post-war reconstruction enterprises. For example, till date, very little research has been undertaken on post-1997 and post-2000 reconstruction programmes in Liberia and Sierra Leone respectively, especially with a view to generating guiding principles for the success of future post-war reconstruction elsewhere on the continent (International Crisis Group 2004).

Last, but not the least, comparative research scholarship provides a strategic prospect for comparing, contrasting, and generating common practices or inadequacies in post-war reconstruction in Africa vis-à-vis the experiences of countries at similar crossroads in other parts of the world. For example, the aggregate funding levels for post-war reconstruction efforts in Africa can be investigated, compared and contrasted with what obtains in other theatres of the world such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Kosovo. Thus, comparing cases within Africa and between Africa and other regions can enable research and policy to make informed, coherent and definitive analysis and argument for change. Boyce sums up this important point by noting, for instance, that '[The] challenges of building peace extend beyond the reconstruction of war-torn societies to the reconstruction of aid itself' (2002: 1044).

A Critique of Theory and Practice in Post-war Reconstruction in Africa

Beyond the itemized objectives of current post-war reconstruction programmes in Africa, four crucial observations warrant further attention in the context of power-elitism and hegemony. The first relates to organizational issues and the lack of coordination among the major actors, who often pursue different and sometimes contradictory national, institutional, geo-political and ideological agenda (Boyce 2002: 1034). There are many complexities or opportunities arising from disorganization and confusions, created by the simultaneous implementation of multiple economic and other post-war sectoral reforms. This situation, Addison (1998) contends, endangers holistic, broad-based recovery. The pacing of reforms after civil wars is a daunting task for policy makers and analysts, thus requiring a great deal of research and theorizing in order to fashion a generic approach or prescription for differentiating and contextualizing experiences from different environments where post-war reconstruction is underway. Stedman (2002) captures this problem succinctly in his assertion that contemporary post-war reconstruction treats all civil wars as difficult to end, gives open-ended and

unspecified implementation strategies, and fails to prioritize among the various tasks of the reconstruction.

The second major observation is the pathologization or viewing of post-war reconstruction as an event involving the implementation of an operational checklist, and re-fixing various institutions and processes within a specified period of time, say, in a two or five-year plan. In Liberia and Sierra Leone, the International Crisis Group (2004) identified the popular checklist to include the following: deployment of peacekeepers; implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes; repatriation of refugees; judicial and security sector reforms; setting up Truth Commissions and War Crime Tribunals; and the organization of elections as the climax. Their report also recommended a time span of fifteen to twenty-five years of continuous international involvement in, and support for war-torn countries in order to strengthen and, indeed, deepen post-war recovery. Yet, the current approach generalizes about the contexts of post-war reconstruction and fails to note how different societal structures, wartime experiences and varying coping mechanisms of the population affect the dynamic of post-war reconstruction.

While it may be true that post-war countries share certain features, including the destruction of lives and property, displacement of populations and failed institutions, it is also true that the different underlying societal structures (socio-cultural, and ethno-religious configurations, and even the scale of wartime destruction) are bound to influence the duration, content and outcomes of post-war reconstruction programmes. The use of multi-party elections as the ultimate seal or index of the successful consummation of post-war reconstruction is ultimately misleading because elections may, in fact, only be an anti-climax, reopening old and new bitter contestations for political power. While elections do matter, more important is how and when they are organized, voting procedures (i.e., open or secret ballots and use or non-use of electoral registers), the choice among simple, absolute or proportional representation, and that between presidential and parliamentary systems. This problem is obvious in the serious contestations and challenges that trailed post-war peace agreement and elections in Angola and Mozambique in the 1990s. Thus, holding multi-party elections and fulfilling other operational checklists are neither adequate guarantees of successful post-war reconstruction, nor are they sufficient signposts for scaling-down commitments, the so-called exit strategy.

A third major observation lies in the overt obsession of many recent post-war reconstruction programmes on the continent, and elsewhere, with a peace-at-all-cost approach; highlighted by the signing of multiple peace agreements, ceasefires and treaties as well as a jumpy facilitation of power sharing agreements within and among warring factions that have committed heinous war crimes. Admittedly, this is understandable since neither meaningful reconstructions effort

can be kick-started nor the immense human suffering alleviated without security. However, the seeming romanticisation of peace agreements exposes one of the troubling externalities of peace building in Africa as international institutions, including western aid agencies, charity and NGOs, wittingly or otherwise, end up underwriting whatever is achieved. Such a situation informs three crucial clogs in post-war reconstruction: first, it is a short-term approach to peace and post-war reconstruction, whereby the silence of guns and artillery shells is unconsciously adopted as the benchmark for the restoration of peace. Thus, the length of silence appears to be the measurement of progress towards sustainable peace, security and reconstruction. Second, and arising from the former, a faster process of disengagement or a sharper so-called exit strategy includes scanty consideration for the likely destabilizing impacts of donors' sometimes abruptly scaling down their engagement with and activities in the country and local economy. In Sierra Leone, for instance, the immediate post-war economy flourished mainly because of donor dollars and employment opportunities offered by NGOs and other agencies involved in post-war reconstruction. However, the gradual and phased withdrawal of these agencies also creates, at least in the short run, a black hole that could, in time, parallel the pre-war years. The use of so-called smart aid, which is designed to achieve greater political gains with less (Western) civilian pain (Boyce 2002: 1037), in place of constructive engagement, following the disengagement process, is hardly effective as revealed by the experience of post-1997 Liberia.

Fourth and most important, the emphasis on peace agreements means that leaders of warring factions become instant heroes or peace celebrities overnight. Amazing material and institutional rewards are dangled before them during peace talks, including interestingly, the actual insertion of such rewards into peace treaties in the form of power sharing, ministerial appointments, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) packages (either directly to the fighters or the leaders on behalf of combatants) and resettlement and reintegration grants. The use of group disarmament in phases II and III of the Sierra Leonean DDR process typifies this phenomenon, with commandos or faction leaders negotiating the number of fighters under their command with implementing officials and an initial *L*300,000 DDR payments per combatant in sight. As it turned out, recourse to group disarmament became a lucrative and enriching business for former commandos even though it also became an incentive for them to disarm and demobilize.³ Reno describes this trend as the new alliance favored by donors to produce stability (1997: 167), and it is exemplified by the appointment of rebel leaders into cabinet positions in Liberia after successive peace treaties and processes and in Sierra Leone under the Lome Peace Agreement of 1999. In the case of Sierra Leone, ironically, rebel leader Foday Sankoh became not only Vice President but was also placed in charge of the lucrative Ministry of Lands and

Mines, as if to make it easier for his RUF followers to continue to mine diamonds illegally. Similar trends have prevailed in Burundi and the DRC.

Another observation is the lopsided funding of post-war reconstruction programmes in Africa. There is evidence to indicate that the scope of funding for post-war reconstruction is closely tied to the geo-political, economic and strategic interests of donors, rather than any internationally acclaimed humanitarian exigencies or concern. Since the end of the Cold War, Africa has accounted for, and continues to account for, the highest number of armed conflicts (SIPRI 2000: 17), refugees and internally displaced persons, civilian casualties, institutional collapse and outright state failure (Zartman 1995: 3). Adding to the already grim picture is the low average income of just US\$315 per capita (excluding South Africa), a median Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of US\$26 billion shared by forty-four countries, and a paltry two per cent share of global trade (World Bank 2000: 7-16). Yet, post-war reconstruction programmes on the continent, compared with those in Eastern Europe and Afghanistan for example, attract disproportionately lower levels of resources as well as politico-diplomatic commitments. While there is a consensus that Africa is suffering more because it has the greatest number of states embroiled in prolonged and devastating civil wars, the unfortunate reality is that there is no corresponding commitment to reconstruction processes from outside in terms of the level of actual resource commitment to the affected states in the continent. Thus, the real tragedy for Africa is not its hardly contested needs and unenviable record in the number and scale of the wars and destruction, but the fact that it is sidelined in the relative distribution of commitments, resources and even presence in relation to other regions or post-war theatres such as Iraq, Afghanistan and Kosovo. Addison (2000) has rightly observed that aid flow to Africa in general declined since 1994 with the continent's share of the European Union (EU) aid to the poorest countries falling from 75 per cent in 1987 to 50 per cent in 1997. Poignantly, by August 1999, donors gave less than half of the US\$796 million needed to rebuild Angola and Somalia, while the Kosovo aid appeal, not even for reconstruction, achieved its US\$265 million target (Addison 2001: 10-11). Regardless of geographical location, however, every war-torn society needs adequate funding in order to break the vicious jinx of anomie, for without funding:

[T]he new state agenda will remain a wish list... [given that] reconstruction expenditures are high, revenues are low (war reduces tax base) and distorted (over dependence on trade taxes). Countries are severely indebted... The fiscal peace dividend is small (Addison 1998: x).

The funding for judicial reforms under the post-war reconstruction programme in Sierra Leone further demonstrated a clear lopsidedness in funding and donors' wish to impose their own agenda, which may not necessarily dovetail with those

of target states. In 2001, for instance, there were only 15 magistrates (each earning only US\$900 per annum), and 18 judges (on a total annual budget of US\$215,000) to administer justice to five million people, compared with the US\$20 million funding available to the American-sponsored Special Court to bring to justice between 24 to 36 war offenders in the country (Reno 2003: 65). Even the World Bank admitted this much when it noted that from 1970 to the mid-1990s (and perhaps even presently) bilateral and multilateral aid was strongly influenced by politics at the international level and by organizational dynamics connected to the internal politics of aid agencies (Boyce 2002: 1034). However, inadequate funding is most damaging to the reform of the security sector component of post-war reconstruction, given the reluctance of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), especially, to approve or fund security related expenses.

Accordingly, how do these observations relate to power elitism in countries making the difficult transition from civil wars to peace in Africa? We argue that they serve to undercut the post-war reconstruction agenda in the continent. Worse still, they reinforce the pre-war and wartime socio-economic, political and even military position, resources and leverage of power elites in transitional and post-conflict societies. Limited funding, for instance, further allows faction leaders, especially those (s)elected into office, to easily manipulate emerging post-war institutions and the entire reform process by transforming their armed factions, for example, into the core post-war state security apparatus, as Charles Taylor did in Liberia after 1997. Politically, wartime gainers, typically power elites, warlords and faction leaders, with vast financial resources procured through illicit plundering of mineral and forest resources, could and are more able to hijack or undermine the electoral process, thus turning multi-party politics into moneybag politics. Again, Taylor's victory in the 1997 elections in Liberia is a clear case in point. Eventually, 'private contributions to winning parties can buy... concessions [that may] benefit those who prospered from war and who have turned themselves into powerful peacetime politicians and businessmen' (Addison 2003: 3). It was in this regard that Ake cast serious doubts on the overriding goal of democratization in post-conflict contexts, arguing that: 'for the political [power] elites, democracy is not about winning a popular mandate, but rather about access to power by every means possible [of which democracy and elections are examples]' (Ake 2000a: 133). It is against the overwhelmingly elitist nature of very recent post-war peace and reconstruction programmes and efforts that El-Masri and Kellet (2001: 4) pinpoint the need for a developmental approach to peace-building that is bottom-up, as opposed to the conventional top-down perspective which is over-burdened with quick outcomes, standardization, professional judgment and short-term humanitarian targets.

It has already been noted that ongoing post-war reconstruction initiatives in Africa have become, by and large, externally-driven processes. For us, then, the

question is not about the inevitability or (un)desirability of this externalization, given the external nature of funding and the demands for standards and benchmarks that come with it. This is because the immediate post-war period is the least ostentatious time for any state to lay claim to sovereignty. Rather, our concern is how to engage this externalization more productively, because even in pre-1990 post-war reconstruction, the decisive role of external actors and sponsors had been apparent. While such externalization may not be negative after all, what is important is to interrogate how it recognizes and interacts with local dynamics, especially the dynamic of power and power-elitism, and how it manipulates and conditions the outcomes of post-war reconstruction agenda.

Finally, post-war reconstruction in Africa is currently skewed towards rebuilding those same institutions and practices that precipitated civil wars, instead of transforming them in a radical manner or even replacing them entirely with new and improved governance models or structures. For instance, implementing neo-liberal economic reforms as part of post-war reconstruction risks repeating the mistakes of the 1980s, when neo-liberal reforms encapsulated under the IMF/World Bank imposed Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) generated massive cut backs in social expenditure on education, health, transportation and housing and unemployment (Keen 2003: 87). It is difficult, and even ironic, to see how neo-liberal reforms that seek to roll back the state in the immediate post-war era — a period when a big state is most needed — could turn around and empower the ordinary citizens. Hence, much of the post-conflict rebuilding agenda in Africa is dotted with the twin dangers of post-war reconstruction identified by Keen (2003): a) the danger of reconstructing the political economy that aided war; and b) the danger of neglecting changes in the attitudes, practices and perceptions of institutions occasioned by the war. In light of the above observations, in what ways are the processes and outcomes of post-war reconstruction affected?

From the survey of extant theory and practice of contemporary post-war reconstruction in Africa, the continued centrality of power elites and regime character appears to be the dominant theme that magnifies the other components and weaknesses of post-war rebuilding programmes and efforts in the continent. The identity and character of political elites continue to determine, in far reaching ways, the processes and outcomes of post-war reconstruction domestically and internationally. Domestically, post-war reconstruction in Africa tends to re-invent the past; bringing back pre-war practices that were crucial to the outbreak of violent conflicts in the first place. This does not negate possible real changes, for instance, institutionalizing multi-party politics, however symbolically, boosting the role of civil society in governance, exposing political leaders to more intrusive international scrutiny, especially by human rights bodies (Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, among others) and providing an oppor-

tunity for a 'new beginning'. Internationally, while post-war regimes are subjected to more scrutiny and pressures by foreign aid agencies and their governments in exchange for financial and material assistance, there is a high probability that it would simply become another route to 'extraversion', defined by Bayart (1993) as the use of external alliances — that is, profiteering from bilateral and multi-lateral relations — to cement domestic power base. Perhaps more important is the tendency to use the character of post-war regimes, rather than the overarching needs of the people and the state, as the conditioner of international goodwill toward, and productive engagements with countries emerging from prolonged and painful civil wars.

On balance, and based on the series of observations already discussed, it seems logical to conclude that any post-war reconstruction venture characterized by highly visible roles for the same power elites and wartime actors, who were responsible for the human, institutional and material destruction, is more likely to reinvent the pitiful disasters and failures of the past. This is especially so, since those power elites are likely to continue the destructive neo-patrimonial and shadow state practices of the past. In contrast, where the political elite embraces real change and are committed to genuinely rebuilding their societies by permitting benign reforms, the processes and outcomes of reconstruction are likely to be positively affected. What is at issue here, then, is the structure and dimensions of contemporary post-war reconstruction that use the character of political elites as the benchmark for gauging the level of reconstruction assistance as well as the international goodwill that is being extended to the war-torn country.

The tentative conclusion; i.e. that the prospect that contemporary post-war reconstruction in Africa might inescapably re-enact the failures of the past, is hardly surprising or unexpected. For one, the architects and executors of the peace treaties and reconstruction programmes are often members of the same ruling class that plunged their respective countries into vengeful conflicts and unprecedented destruction. Besides, it is also the case that post-war peace treaties and reconstruction efforts may turn around to reward violence and rebellion through those same outlets already noted, thus placing the perpetrators of violence at vantage material and financial positions to determine the direction and content of social, economic and political processes throughout the period of recovery. Such repositioning of power elites, as this study reveals, may further increase the scale of unequal growth and recovery long after the cessation of armed hostilities in the affected countries (Addison and Murshed 2001: 12). In the next chapters, the taxonomy and steady processes of state collapse, civil wars, post-war regimes and the challenges of peace building and reconstruction in Liberia and Sierra Leone will be discussed.

2

State Collapse and Civil Wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone

Introduction

In many ways, Liberia and Sierra Leone can be described as twins although they are not identical. Historically, both are the result of the search for a haven for ‘free men of colour’ in Europe and the New World in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Thus in 1787, the present capital of Sierra Leone, Freetown, meaning literally the town of the free, was founded by the British government to accommodate freed slaves from the United Kingdom and Canada. The descendants of the settlers later became known as Creoles. Several years later, the rest of the country was declared a British Protectorate, followed by full blown colonial suzerainty that lasted until 1961 when the country became independent. At independence, power was transferred to a select group of indigenous elites, led by Sir Milton Margai, a Mende under the Sierra Leone Peoples’ Party (SLPP). Due to early exposure to European culture and education, however, the Creoles, a minority, dominated the professions, including law, medicine, teaching, and the civil service. Until the mid-1970s, they kept a safe distance from the political fray, a development that gave rise in part to what is often described as Creoledom.⁴

Like Sierra Leone, modern Liberia is also the product of the anti-slave movement, having been ‘founded’ by freed slaves under the auspices of the American Colonization Society. The small band of settlers from the US arrived in what was known as the Guinea Coast and re-christened the territory Liberia, ‘the land of the free’, in 1822. Not surprisingly, the official motto is ‘the love of liberty brought us here’. Some twenty-five years later, in 1847, the settlers, now popularly called Americo-Liberians, declared the settlement independent, thereby making Liberia the oldest republic in Africa (Akpan 1973; Liebenow 1966; Marinelli 1964; Sesay 1980, 1983, 1992). However, the minority settlers were reluctant to extend the liberty they cherished to the indigenous majority, and held on to power continu-

ously until the bloody coup of 1980 that put an end to their clutch on the country (Sawyer 1992).

Even before independence, there were still significant differences between the two neighbouring West African countries. The most important, perhaps, is that while Sierra Leone came under complete British colonial administration, Liberia was able to maintain its independence and was never colonized in the classical sense by any European power. However, the Americo-Liberians, who constituted only five per cent of the total population, controlled every facet of national life in Liberia until 1980. They controlled the political, economic, religious and even the social life of the country and its people under the dominance of the ruling True Whig Party (TWP),⁵ which was in power continuously from 1878 until the April coup of 1980. The coup brought an indigenous man, former Master Sergeant Samuel Kanyon Doe, to the Presidential Mansion, seat of political power in the country. Thus, Liberia was the first *de facto* one-party state in Africa under the TWP, long before the phenomenon became a political vogue in the late 1970s and 1980s. The Americo-Liberians were a distinct social class in the Marxian and sociological senses. They exhibited, broadly, the same lifestyles, and a more or less similar ideology in their relationships with each other and with the rest of the indigenous people of Liberia. In addition, they were proudly conscious of their social status and pre-eminence which was aggressively defended in discriminatory ways vis-à-vis the larger indigenous population. This situation has been succinctly captured by Michael Akpan (1973) in his seminal article on 'black on black', as distinct from the more familiar 'white-on-black' colonialism practised by the European countries in Africa.

Political Manipulation, Economic Mismanagement and State Collapse in Liberia

Liberia's contemporary political and socio-economic difficulties and the resultant violent conflicts, like those of Sierra Leone, are best understood from the standpoint of its unique history, especially the forces, interests and contradictions which its past and very recent experiences have generated. This can be explained by closely examining the country's status in the global political economy; being among the least developed countries in the world. The Liberian case is particularly interesting, because the country was once among the medium income countries, but declined progressively during the course of the 1980s to join the league of least developed countries where it remains to date. Although on the surface, the processes that led to Liberia's descent into the political and socio-economic abyss are similar to those of Sierra Leone, they nonetheless exhibited vital differences. First is the minority factor, such that the Americo-Liberians, who constituted only five per cent of the total population at most, nonetheless controlled politics for over one hundred years to the total exclusion of the indigenous majority. They occu-

pied most of the important political positions under the de facto single party system, as well as the all-powerful freemasonic temples and lay positions in the church hierarchy. For instance, William Tolbert, nineteenth president and successor to William Tubman, was the flag bearer of the country's only political party, the TWP, and could therefore dispense sinecure privileges through patronage networks (Sawyer 1992). At the religious level, President Tolbert was also the Vice President of the World Baptist Convention, a position he held for over a quarter of a century.

Expectedly, movement along the political, religious and social ladders in the country was through the support and patronage of the True Whig Party, the Masonic temples and the Baptist and Methodist churches. Without such support and sponsorships, it was impossible for indigenous Liberians, no matter how highly educated, to find a meaningful place in the country's political, economic, religious and social ladder. Much more frustrating for the indigenous majority, especially the conscious ones, was the absence of guaranteed avenues for effective political participation and dissent. Although under the Constitution any 300 citizens could form a political party, in practice, it was impossible due to the elaborate security agencies and networks put in place by President Tubman, and retained by his successor, William Tolbert, to douse opposition. Until the mid-1960s, indigenous Liberians were barred from representing their people in Senate and the House of Representatives and could only observe proceedings. As Boley states:

...persons of tribal origins interested in observing the proceedings of the national legislature could do so only upon depositing with the Government in Monrovia the sum of \$100. As an observer, a tribal delegate had no voting rights. For no less than a century, the tribal peoples had been taxed to support a government in which they were never represented (1983: 64).

Unlike their American counterparts in the eighteenth century who, by the way, made an issue out of the famous 'no taxation without representation' political slogan, the majority tribal Liberians paid taxes, even though they had no representation in government for over a century. The mindset, orientation and socialization processes of the Americo-Liberian elites revealed their perception of indigenous Liberians as uncivilized, if not primitive, people who were incapable of governing themselves. In 1951, Tubman had angrily condemned the attempt by D. Twe, an indigenous Liberian, to establish an opposition party and described Twe's actions as ungrateful. However, Tubman was happy that the settlers were able to make a difference in the lives of the indigenous people. As he puts it:

...thank God...the light of Christianity, education, civilization, culture, refinement and dignity has gone froth to ...numerous thousands of members of the tribes whom they met here in heathenism, ignorance and

superstition bowing down before the gods of wood and stone (Tubman, 1951 cf. Townsend (ed.), 1969:98).

The history of the Americo-Liberian elite, who evidently did not believe the indigenous people had the capacity to govern themselves, explains in part why they were reluctant to countenance the possibility of an indigenous president in Liberia. The settlers ensured that the economy remained in the hands of multinational concessions, especially the mining and rubber industries, with which they had very close sinecure relationships as directors and legal advisers, while paying little attention to the welfare of the majority population (Sesay 1980: 15-30).

Although Tubman addressed some of the basic grievances of the indigenous Liberians through social, economic and political reforms, the measures were largely cosmetic and did not bring the majority of citizens into the societal mainstream. Despite severe disparities between the Americo-Liberian elite and the rest of the population, Tubman was nonetheless regarded as “father of the nation”, because his Unification Policy in 1964 granted civil rights to the indigenous people for the first time since 1847. The effects of the country’s extreme economic inequality were cushioned somewhat, by an export boom as well as generous political and economic support from the US, Liberia’s acknowledged political benefactor. As a result, by 1971 when he died, Tubman had succeeded in integrating some educated indigenous elites into the political and economic life of the country, provided they were willing to accept the Americo-Liberian way of life and political philosophy. However, a majority of the citizens remained outside of the country’s elaborate political patronage system and mired in deep poverty. As a result of Tubman’s elaborate benevolence, a facade of peace and stability was maintained in the country for over two decades and Liberia was described as one of the most stable and peaceful countries in Africa (Sesay 1983: 48-71).

William Tolbert, Tubman’s successor from 1971 to 1980, was not so fortunate. Tolbert became president at a time of unprecedented turbulence in the national and global economy, occasioned by the more than four-fold hike in oil price, resulting from the Arab oil embargo on the West on whom Liberia, like nearly all non-oil producing African States, depended entirely for its energy needs. In addition to the agonizing impact of high crude oil prices, the value of Liberia’s major exports — iron ore, rubber, and timber — were in dramatic decline on the world market. The period also witnessed the steady return or homecoming of many highly qualified and competent indigenous Liberians, who were determined to claw their way to the political centre in the country (Sesay 1983). Unlike their predecessors, these highly educated and politically conscious Liberians were prepared to return home to test the political terrain, to jostle for positions when possible, or to devote their time to politically sensitizing their indigenous compatriots on their rights and privileges as Liberians, rights to be defended in the face of unending infringements by the ruling Americo-Liberian oligarchy.

In a country where majority of the population earned less than US\$30 a month at that time, the most important test case was the strike called by Baccus Mathews on April 14, 1979 to protest a planned increase in the price of rice from US\$22 to US\$30 per hundred-pound bag; the strike precipitated what became widely known as the 'rice riots' (Boley 1983; Sesay 1983). Although the strike was a failure, the heavy-handed manner with which it was suppressed left hundreds of protesters dead, and the entire leadership of the Progressive Alliance of Liberia (PAL), Baccus Mathews' political party, arrested and charged with sedition and treason. The cavalier manner in which the protest was crushed, as one commentator lamented, 'would probably not have enraged the Liberian public so much had the President of Liberia and one of his brothers not been connected with the production, importation and sale of rice' (Boley 1983: 101). This point is important because high office holders, including very close members of the president's family, were linked with many business deals and activities that were perceived in opposition circles as insensitive, selfish and anti-people. Perhaps, this was the point that the abortive demonstration by Mathews and PAL was trying to draw attention to in a country not used to openly challenging government and presidential fiat. Furthermore, the corruption charges against the Tolbert family and his administration were orchestrated by the radical Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA) to which Mathews and the other educated indigenous elite belonged at the time.⁶

The apparent mishandling of what was essentially a peaceful demonstration by opposition elements and supporters seriously tainted Liberia's image as a peaceful and stable country, especially, coming at the moment the country had concluded plans to host the annual summit of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in July 1979 – less than three months after the rice riots. Concurrently, the presidency of Jimmy Carter in the US had introduced respect for human rights as one of the cardinal thrusts of America's foreign policy, especially in Africa and other Third World countries. The rice riots also coincided with the inauguration of a Commission of Jurists by the Franco-African Summit to investigate the alleged killing of unarmed students by the regime of Emperor Jean Bokassa of the then Central African Republic, and among the Commission's members was a Liberian jurist. In an adroit political move that was aimed at image laundering, Tolbert unexpectedly released all those arrested during the demonstration, including Mathews and the entire leadership of PAL, on the eve of the OAU summit.

Nonetheless, if Tolbert was hoping to douse the opposition's fire and, at the same time, repair the country's badly damaged image at home and abroad, he was soon proved wrong, for the respite by the opposition was short-lived indeed. In an apparent test of political wits, Mathews, by now the most visible opposition figure in the country, called a general strike for March 7, 1980 to rattle and

force Tolbert out of office. The strike again failed, but it provided the now exasperated Tolbert with a good pretext for silencing the opposition and Mathews, in particular, once and for all. Consequently, Mathews and other senior opposition elements were detained at the notorious Bela Yela prison. In an intemperate nation-wide broadcast, the president heaped blame on the opposition whom he accused of trying to topple the 'legally constituted government of the Republic of Liberia' by force. He described those involved in the alleged plot as a 'group of lawless criminal-minded citizens, joined by hooligans'. He vowed to finally put an end to the seeming threat posed by 'leftist associations' to Americo-Liberian supremacy in Liberia, in 'such a way that they will never rise again' (*West Africa*, March 17, 1980: 468 and 500). Tolbert made it absolutely clear that those involved in the coup plot should not expect clemency, if found guilty. The president's broadcast was followed by solidarity rallies from True Whig Party members and messages of support from prominent political figures in the country. Most importantly, the Liberian Congress, comprised of Senate and the House of Representatives and dominated by pliant Americo-Liberian and indigenous politicians, passed a unanimous resolution that urged:

... Dr. William Richard Tolbert, Jr. President of Liberia by the direction of Almighty God, to employ the powers of his Office, the law enforcing agencies of this nation and all other measures at his command to vigorously and strenuously pursue and apprehend and bring to justice those villainous traitors thereby ridding our Nation of repetition of these acts (Boley 1983: 107).

The hard-line stance of the president worried not only enlightened indigenous Liberians, but also ordinary people, who were, by now, beginning to get used to challenging the hitherto invincible authority of the True Whig Party and Americo-Liberian oligarchy in the country. More significantly, perhaps, was the popular perception among them that the president and the True Whig Party were determined to eliminate the leadership of the opposition, in order to protect vested political and economic interests.

This perception of the Americo-Liberian elites' plans, as manifested in the president's national broadcast and political rallies in support of his hard line, filtered through to the rank and file in the Armed Forces of Liberia, then mainly made up of indigenous Liberians. Some of the indigenous members of the Armed Forces of Liberia, including Samuel Doe, were attending adult literacy evening classes organized by radical intellectual members of MOJA led by Dr. Togbana Tipoteh, who became Minister for Economic Development in Doe's short-lived revolutionary cabinet. Hence, in a well-timed rescue operation, fourteen non-commissioned officers led by then 28-year-old Master Sergeant Samuel Kanyon Doe, stormed the Executive Mansion, seat of the Liberian Government in Monrovia and brutally killed President Tolbert on April 12, 1980 (Sesay 1983).

The killing of the president, thirteen top officers of the True Whig Party, and well-known Americo-Liberian elites brutally brought 133 years of Americo-Liberian political and social domination of the indigenous Liberians to a gory and inopportune end. Doe became the first indigenous Liberian to hold the exalted office of President of the Republic. Not unexpectedly, Doe justified the coup in his first nation-wide broadcast:

... There had been incomparable corruption in the form of conflict of interests... the selling of influence, the use of official positions for private gain, and other forms of corruption... there were illegal seizures and even convictions without trial... the unemployment situation was so bad that there were more people looking for work than employed... the cost of food is high and most of the people cannot afford the \$40 to buy a bag of rice... the health situation is so terrible that nearly one out of every five newly born babies dies before reaching the age of one... (*West Africa*, April 21, 1980: 689).

The leading role played by the indigenous Liberian opposition members in the build up to the coup was reflected in the distribution of important ministerial portfolios in Doe's first cabinet: Togba Nah Tipoteh became Minister for Economic Planning and Development; Boima Fahnbulleh, Education; Amos Sawyer, Special Adviser; George E. Boley, Presidential Affairs Minister and, finally, Charles Taylor headed the General Services Agency (GSA), the most important government department charged with bulk purchasing and distribution of essential goods. There was much euphoria among the indigenous people, following the overthrow of the Americo-Liberian rule in Liberia. It was popularly believed that the first indigenous government in Liberia's long history would quickly reverse the wrongs of years of Americo-Liberian misrule and injustice, and that the new regime would pursue policies that would improve the living conditions of the majority of the Liberian people within the shortest possible time.

The 'Liberian revolution' did not last, however, due to Doe's inordinate desire to concentrate power around himself, a situation which then led to intense tussle for power within the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC). Expectedly, the civilian members of the government, who were mainly MOJA members, were among the first casualties in this politically and militarily dangerous game, as many of them were either dropped or forced to leave the cabinet less than two years after the coup (Sesay 1983). Notably, all other members of the 'gang of 14' that had toppled Tolbert in April 1980 were either killed or forced into exile in neighbouring countries and afar. What soon became apparent was that having savoured political power and its trappings, Doe was unwilling to relinquish or share it with anyone. To achieve that objective, he unleashed an unparalleled reign of terror on the entire country, even by Liberian standards up to that time, by targeting those he suspected of nursing political ambitions that might undermine

his authority. By 1984, four years after the coup, Doe declared his intention to contest the 1985 general elections as a presidential candidate of the National Democratic Party of Liberia (NDPL), which he also floated for that purpose, in spite of intense American pressure for him to step down (Sesay 1992).

In a desperate bid to forestall his imminent ‘civilianisation’, Thomas Quiwonkpa, a very close friend of Charles Taylor and only survivor of the gang of 14 apart from Doe himself, launched an unsuccessful coup the morning of September 25, 1985, from neighbouring Sierra Leone. In reprisal killings, over 3,000 people, mainly Manos and Gios from Nimba County, home of Quiwonkpa, were killed on Doe’s orders. Numerous houses were also destroyed, as if to teach those who would like to challenge his regime a lesson they would not easily forget. The collapse of the coup also saw the flight of Taylor, a close ally of Quiwonkpa, to neighbouring Sierra Leone and then to the United States. Doe did not hide his determination to eliminate anyone who had the effrontery to challenge his regime which was then dominated by his Khran ethnic group (Boley *op. cit.*).

Charles Taylor’s escape from prison in the US while he was waiting extradition to Liberia to face corruption charges is the subject of much speculation. One version is that he was released by the American Central Intelligence Agency to return to Liberia and overthrow Doe who had become a heavy burden on the Liberian people and an embarrassment to his erstwhile American allies. Another account, also linked to the CIA, is that Taylor struck a deal with Ellen-Johnson Sirleaf, a Liberian then working with the World Bank in Washington, D.C., to wrest power from Doe and transfer it back to the Americo-Liberian oligarchy with Sirleaf as one of the presidential contenders.⁷ On Christmas Eve 1989, and with support from Cote d’Ivoire, Burkina Faso and Libya, where he and his core followers had received military training, Charles Taylor launched an attack on a security post along the Liberian border with Cote d’Ivoire, signaling the start of one of the longest and bloodiest civil wars in West African history (Sesay 2003).

Sierra Leone: Democratic Misadventure, Civil War and Good-bye to Innocence

Sierra Leone’s post-independence experience, especially under the All Peoples Congress (APC) of Siaka Stevens, was like that of most other countries in Africa — a squandering of wealth, opportunities and goodwill — a far cry from the high euphoria that accompanied flag independence on April 27, 1961. It is a sobering experience, because unlike many African countries, Sierra Leone had a good head start, even under colonial rule, that could have laid a solid foundation for the country’s socio-economic and political development and prosperity for its relatively small population. For example, Sierra Leone boasts of the oldest university in West Africa, Fourah Bay College, where many of the first generation

intellectuals and leaders of Nigeria and other West African countries were trained. Besides, the Creoles provided the backbone of the country's civil service and dominated white collar professions. Many of the top colonial civil servants in other British West African colonial possessions, including The Gambia, Ghana and Nigeria, were predominantly Creole. Not surprisingly, the early black missionaries in West Africa, as well as some of the early nationalists, were also Creoles. The first Anglican Bishop of West Africa, Samuel Ajayi Crowder, had his roots in Sierra Leone, as did nationalists like Herbert Macaulay and Wallace Johnson.

In terms of its political development at independence, Sierra Leone inherited a Westminster system of government with a unicameral legislature, similar to other former British colonies. The first five years of independence until the military coup in 1967 witnessed a lively debate in Parliament as well as a vibrant press, while the army remained essentially apolitical. This helps to explain why Sierra Leone was the first country in SSA where the opposition was able to take over power from the incumbent government without the military lifting a finger.⁸ In spite of that transfer, however, there was very little attempt to empower majority of the people economically and politically. Not only was political power concentrated at the centre in Freetown, the capital, to the neglect of the rest of the country, so also were economic activities as well as amenities such as electricity, water supply and even roads.

It is important to note that even under the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) government, when the country experienced some semblance of democratic governance, two ethnic groups, the Mende and the Temne, the largest and second largest groups respectively, dominated politics and political power (Alie 2000: 15). However, it was during the premiership of Albert Margai, junior brother of founding father of the nation, Sir Milton Margai, that ethnicity began its destructive inroad into the politics of the country. This was particularly so after Albert Margai's failed attempt to introduce a Republican Constitution in 1966, leaving behind recriminations among the political elites as well as the enlightened public. During the first five years of independence, the diamond producing areas in the country's south-east were neglected and remained isolated from the centre of power and economic development, despite their contributing an overwhelming percentage of the country's foreign exchange earnings (Richards, 1996).

It is ironic that the All Peoples' Congress (APC), which enjoyed a relatively free and level political playing field while in opposition, was also the party that instigated the destruction of all democratic tenets and institutions in the country once it came to power in 1968 under Siaka Stevens' leadership. Stevens, a former trade union leader, manipulated ethnicity in a way that was hitherto unknown in the political experience of Sierra Leone. Coming from the minority Limba ethnic group, Stevens did not make that fact known until well into his presidency. He gave the impression that he had Creole connections by using his middle name

Probyn to confuse the citizens. Flaunting working class credentials with leftist pretensions, Stevens presented the image of a leader committed to the welfare of the ordinary man and woman who have been neglected by the SLPP administration since independence in 1961. To give credence to this perception, the APC recruited as its members, even at the top level, workers, school drop-outs and trade union movement members. The party used its classless pretensions to harangue the ruling SLPP and to win the support of the working class people not only in Freetown but also in the provinces. Stevens drew most of his support from the Temne and Limba in the north. He also attracted support from the Creoles in Freetown.

Although Stevens had refused to be associated with any particular tribe or ethnic group while in the opposition, soon after he became prime minister, he directly and indirectly advanced the interests of the Limba ethnic group, hitherto unknown for its political ambitions, by bringing them into the mainstream of national politics and culture. Almost immediately, Limba became one of the national languages, and reading the national news in Limba became mandatory. Stevens, whose ethnic background was for many years shrouded in some mystery, then openly professed his Limba roots.⁹ The president and the APC tried spiritedly to advance Limba interests in other important spheres such as employment, the army, education, especially through the provision of scholarships to study abroad, and so forth. To effectively pursue the Limba agenda, senior political office holders, civil servants, traditional and educated Limbas formed the Ekute Club and assiduously peddled and executed the Limba agenda to the chagrin and frustration of the Mendes and Temnes, who once dominated national politics and constituted more than half of the country's population (Sesay 1999).

The road to dictatorship in Sierra Leone started at the highest level of political leadership, as it became increasingly apparent that Stevens did not have the temperament of a democrat. He blatantly assaulted the opposition in ways that deprived it of political space in the country. Stevens and the APC frontally and unabashedly undermined key democratic institutions, sparing none on the brutal road to establishing the APC as the sole political party in the country. The judiciary, the institution of last resort for the common man, was among the first to be destroyed. It was so emasculated and cowed that with time, it became a mere rubber stamp in the highly manipulative hands of the presidency. This phenomenon was particularly noticeable in cases which were perceived as politically sensitive or in which the president took an interest.

Through extensive use of political patronage and cooptation, Stevens sponsored many promising young men into parliament unopposed during the 1977 elections. This development deprived them of critical and independent thinking, since they did not have a political constituency and depended on the 'Pa' for their

political advancement and survival, especially those who had abandoned their studies in Europe and the Americas to contest the elections on the APC's platform. It was hardly surprising when the APC began to amend the Constitution not long after the elections, in order to pave way for the enthronement of a one-party state. The now pliant Parliament, for instance, gave overwhelming power to the President in the appointment of the Chief Justice and Attorney General, who lost secured tenure and were expected to hold office at the pleasure of the president. To consolidate his grip on the judiciary, the retirement age for judges became fluid and therefore subject to political manipulation, as any judge '... may be required by the president to retire anytime after attaining the age of fifty-five years, or may retire at any time after attaining the age of sixty-two years or shall vacate that office on attaining the age of sixty-five' (Republican Constitution, 1978: 75). An increase in presidential powers has obvious implications for the independence of the judiciary. A judge that demonstrated independence in discharging his or her duties could be retired arbitrarily at any time before the age of sixty-five and as early as fifty-five. As the president of the Sierra Leone Bar Association correctly noted that the constitutional amendment 'hangs like a "Sword of Damocles" over the heads of judges and the Chief Justice whenever they adjudicate on matters of special interest to the executive' (*West Africa*, May 1978: 1039).

The APC's rise to political prominence after winning the 1967 general elections was due in part to its effective use of the political space that allowed it to successfully float an opposition paper, *We Yone*, meaning 'Our Own' in Creole, which became famous for its trenchant weekly editorials on topical issues in the country. The columnist, Ibrahim Taqui, became a household name in the run-up to the elections, through his weekly articles that sought to expose the underbelly of the SLPP government. Pushing the press laws to the limit, Taqui took on the government on many issues and successfully undermined its credibility and support among the residents of Freetown, where the newspaper circulated widely. The opposition newspaper was effectively used to challenge and harangue the SLPP government and, in particular, to frustrate moves by Prime Minister Sir Albert Margai to introduce a Republican Constitution in 1966.

Once in office, however, the APC government successfully handcuffed the once vibrant independent press through draconian press laws which forced many newspapers out of circulation. The most devastating and notorious law was the *Newspaper Amendment Bill of July 1980* also known as the 'Killer Bill', which laid down very stringent conditions for operating a press. Under this obnoxious law, all existing newspaper licenses were revoked, compelling newspaper operators to reapply, within a month of the bill becoming law, to the Minister of Information for a Certificate of Registration at what was then an exorbitant fee of Le2000. All editors and publishers were also required to renew their license annually, a condition that gave the Minister of Information wide powers to deny registra-

tion to those perceived as critical of government policies and officials. The impact of the bill was devastating. Within a few months, only four newspapers were left in operation, three of which were owned directly by government, like the *Daily Mail*, and the fourth by the APC.

Long before the Killer Bill was enacted, however, freedom of speech had been threatened with frequent and sometimes deadly attacks on the independent press. For instance, the premises of the *Express* newspaper were bombed in early 1970, while those of the *Freedom* newspaper suffered a similar fate later that year. In the attack on the former, a school boy who had gone to the newspaper's premises early in the morning for supplies to sell before going to school was killed by the bomb blast which also left the press machines completely destroyed.¹⁰

With the press either muffled or banned entirely, it became relatively easy for the government to embark upon other obnoxious policies in the country. Again, Stevens put into effective use his experiences while in opposition to advance the APC. His popularity as a politician, especially in Freetown and other major towns, had much to do with his long association with the trade union movement in the country, and as secretary of the powerful Miners' Union. He used the positions effectively to project himself as a man of the people and friend of the oppressed. Stevens toyed with socialism and socialist ideas, then in vogue among opposition politicians in Africa and indeed, across the Third World. By championing the cause of the poor, Stevens and the APC were able to present themselves as sensitive and sympathetic to the plight of majority of citizens, including a significant section of the white collar elite. Because Stevens was largely perceived as a populist, he received massive support from the labour movement during the 1967 elections; and not long after he was officially sworn in as Prime Minister in 1968, the powerful Taxi and other Professional Drivers' Union of Sierra Leone conferred on him the honorific title, 'Chief Motor Driver'.

Nonetheless, Siaka Stevens' romance with labour was short-lived as the APC government under him turned its back against that group and worked openly and assiduously to undermine the movement through a mixture of cooptation and draconian legislation. Key officials of the labour unions were either tempted with juicy government jobs or positions within the APC political hierarchy. For example, M. I. Mansaray, erstwhile Secretary of the Dock Workers Union, was made Director on the Board of Ports Authority, one of the most powerful but also corrupted agencies in the country because of its access to scarce foreign exchange. Again, E. T. Kamara, then Secretary General of the Mine Workers' Union, a position once held by Stevens, was given a plumb scholarship to study public administration in the UK; and, on his return a year later, he was appointed into the powerful post of Administrative Secretary General of the APC, a position he held for more than a decade. The biggest coup, however, was the appointment of the Secretary General of the Motor Drivers' Union, Gbassay Kanu,

to Parliament as nominee of the president, after which he was made a junior minister in the lucrative Ministry of Mines and Power (*West Africa*, March 1, 1982: 62). Under the APC administration, therefore, the labour movement could not effectively protect the interests of its teeming members. In the end, collective bargaining was undermined and eventually proscribed by the APC regime. Meanwhile, labour leaders were themselves busy trying to feather their nests by hustling for government appointments or moving close to the ruling party hierarchy. It was not surprising that even strikes were banned (Luke 1984).

After rendering labour unions ineffectual, the APC regime turned its attention to other civil society groups. Between 1977 and 1978, the APC paid particular attention to students at the vanguard of opposition, who vehemently and consistently resisted authoritarian rule from the time of Albert Margai, Stevens' predecessor, as far back as 1966. Not only were many students expelled from Fourah Bay College following the 1977 convocation demonstration (Abdullah and Bangura 1997), the institution itself became a prime target for security operatives and undercover agents who monitored lecturers and students, and reported 'subversive' elements directly to 'Pa', as Stevens was called. Some lecturers associated with the radical student movement also lost their jobs (Ibid.). Once identified as the pioneering centre of excellence in higher education in West Africa, Fourah Bay College was deliberately starved of funds by the APC administration while its infrastructure was left to decay. The library was devoid of books while laboratories lacked vital equipment. More importantly, in terms of long-term effect on university education in the country, several lecturers were compelled to leave the country in search of jobs abroad. Nigeria, then bubbling with oil money following the Arab oil embargo in the early 1970s, became a preferred destination for university teachers, but many also went to Europe and America. Unfortunately, majority of them never returned to Sierra Leone, resulting in a devastating brain drain from which the country has not recovered. Indeed, the bestial and long civil war merely compounded the brain drain as a second wave of professionals, including lecturers, were again forced to leave the country. Many promising young men and women were lured into the political arena because of the hardships in the country, and many of them have remained there, although their contribution to national development is frustratingly undermined. Finally, those young men who could not leave the country, for one reason or the other, joined the army of jobless Sierra Leoneans who provided the fertile breeding ground for recruitment by the Revolutionary United Front rebel movement to begin the war in 1991 and thereafter (Bangura 1997: 13-40).

The final blow to democracy and any semblance of good governance came in 1978 with the introduction of a single party constitution. This political transmutation was quickly and cynically reflected in the APC's motto which was changed from 'Now or Never' to 'Live for Ever', in line with the then 'president for life'

and ‘sit tight’ leadership syndrome in African politics. From such a perspective, the one-party system became the last and most important piece in the massive political puzzle that Stevens and his cronies devised to entrench themselves and the party in the political life of the country. In retrospect, it also constituted the most devastating socio-economic and political development in the country, as Stevens and the APC became paranoid about staying in power at all cost. Indeed, holding on to power became the *raison d’être* even when it was obvious that the country was grinding to a halt under the weight of rampant corruption, cronyism and crass incompetence on the part of the political leadership in the country, and unprecedented youth unemployment on the sideline. Stevens was unabashed about the one-party system and handcuffed the opposition, which deepened the crisis of political leadership and governance in the country. Stevens justified the one-party system this way:

I have spoken before on the luxury of political debate, and I think this must apply to small dissenting parties in African countries such as my own... we have not time to hang around talking (Stevens 1984: 270).

However, the president’s justification flew in the face of the well-established belief that political competition promotes respect for basic human rights and, ultimately, provides the basis for transparency and accountability, economic development and enhanced welfare of the citizens in the long run. The irony of the Sierra Leonean situation under the APC was that the country experienced unprecedented political and economic stagnation, even though it was not ‘dissipating energy on financing a multi-party system’,¹¹ contrary to Stevens’ arguments in favour of the single party. Consequently, the country was put on a reverse gear that took it to the depths of poverty, deprivation and disease as it earned the unenviable status of one of the poorest and least developed countries in Africa, while its citizens were among the most deprived in the world.

Stevens and his cronies, including the infamous, naturalized Lebanese, Jamil Sahid Mohammed, targeted the commanding heights of the economy — the diamond industry and the Central Bank of Sierra Leone — which became veritable conduits for siphoning and/or distributing scarce resources such as foreign exchange among the small circle of political favourites in the country.¹² Indeed, the popular catchphrase that was accredited to the president, the Pa, especially in the Freetown area, seat of the most enlightened crop of Sierra Leoneans, was ‘wu si then tie cow na dey e go eat’, meaning literally, ‘a cow grazes where it is tied’. Eddie Momoh, one of the most trenchant political commentators at the time, captured this phenomenon poignantly:

For the most part, it would seem that Stevens was convinced that whosoever controlled the state resources...could build personal power. He dished out state resources as political patronage. He doled out huge

sums of money...‘as if money grew on trees’. He wanted money even when he had enough (*West Africa*, December 2, 1988: 2513).

Another keen observer of the socio-political scene in Sierra Leone had this to say about the way Stevens and the APC managed the economy:

...allocating the foreign exchange proceeds became the subject for presidential approval. It is a unique situation, as the central bank was completely rendered redundant by the arrangement, which also vested a lot of patronage in Stevens (Fearon 1988: 131).

Quite expectedly, vital social sectors like education, health, water, roads and public transport, were allowed to rot (Fyle 1993) while hospitals, including the famous Connaught Hospital in Freetown, once a centre of excellence, became permanent ‘resting chambers’¹³ for the sick who went there for medical attention. The exit of Stevens and his replacement by a hand-picked successor, Joseph Saidu Momoh, former Commander of the Armed Forces, did not improve matters. In fact, it deepened the country’s crisis of governance and leadership, akin to the proverbial phrase ‘from the frying pan to fire’. Momoh not only lacked the requisite experience and political base, but also the capacity to appreciate the enormity of the socio-political and economic situation of the country, which required drastic surgery to break from the past. The new president was inept and lacked a clear focus of what was to be done to get the country out of the woods. In several respects, his tenure exacerbated the misfortunes of Sierra Leone as a country and of its already disheveled, hapless and marginalized population. Although the new president called for a ‘New Order’ soon after he assumed office, Momoh lacked the legitimacy, mental capacity, vision, energy and commitment to bring it to fruition. Thus, it was business-as-usual in the conduct of the president and political office holders, who simply feathered their nests at the expense of the masses.

In particular, no serious effort was made to bring the civil war, which started on a low key in March 1991 with rebel incursions in the south-eastern parts of the country, to a timely and conclusive end. Significantly, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) of disgraced army corporal, Foday Sankoh, received significant logistical, moral and financial support from Charles Taylor, who had also started a war in neighbouring Liberia in December 1989. The APC’s neglect of the welfare of soldiers at the war front, and the war effort generally, prompted a coup by Captain Valentine Strasser in 1992, a year after the civil war began. Contrary to popular expectations, however, Strasser’s approach to the war was also condemnable, as he spent a lot of time plotting how to ‘civilianize’ so that he would contest presidential elections scheduled for 1996 (Reno 2003; Sesay 1998). The high point of Strasser’s youthful ambition was his half-hearted attempt to tinker with the Constitution to accommodate his young age; he was only 32 years

old then. A palace coup led by his second-in-command, Steven Maada Bio, set the stage for general and presidential elections in March 1996, which brought to power Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, a former bureaucrat in the UN system, who pledged to bring the civil war, then five years old, to a speedy end.

3

Regime Types and Post-war Reconstruction in Liberia

Introduction

The sudden demise of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s signaled the end of one of the most important and treacherous eras in the history of modern man, the Cold War. While it lasted, the Cold War was the euphemism for the most intense rivalry between two ideological camps backed by the world's greatest military alliance systems then: the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) led by the United States and the Warsaw Pact Treat Organization (WPTO) led by the Soviet Union. Significantly, while the end of the Cold War precipitated the inexorable decline in great power interest in Africa and African affairs, it also triggered the collapse of central authority in many African states that were once financed and supported by Washington and Moscow either directly or indirectly. West Africa was for many years the most adversely affected as it experienced two concurrent bloody and debilitating civil wars: in Liberia from 1989 to 1997 and from 2000 to 2003, and in Sierra Leone from 1991 and 2002.

Some of the most distinctive features of the two civil wars were their protracted nature, the brutality that characterized them, and the massive involvement of large segments of the populations, especially children, who performed various functions as child soldiers, sex slaves, or as perpetrators of the most heinous crimes. The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone was notorious for its crude and indiscriminate amputation of civilians: babies, children, youth, men and women. The phenomenon soon gave rise to a different interpretation of popular English expressions like 'short sleeve' and 'long sleeve'. In the parlance of the RUF, 'short sleeve' was amputation of one or both hands from the elbow, while 'long sleeve' was amputation of the hand from the wrist. The wars in both Liberia and Sierra Leone displaced hundreds of thousands of civilians internally, or forced many to flee to neighbouring and even distant countries in the sub-region and beyond as refugees. West Africa was seriously destabilized by the wars

because of the mass inflow of refugees into other countries, and because of the subversive and destabilizing policies and activities of some states that actively supported the politico-diplomatic, economic and military efforts of different rebel factions and dissident groups in the two countries. The civil wars also tested the resilience of the sub-regional economic grouping, ECOWAS, which not only mounted peacekeeping operations in both countries under the institutional framework of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), but also came under attack from some members (Sesay 1999). Even now when hostilities have long ceased and new governments are in power in Monrovia and Freetown, there remain controversies as to what ECOWAS/ECOMOG actually achieved, including opinions that it basically prolonged the war and created new fighting factions, and that ECOMOG brought sanity to otherwise highly explosive and hopeless situations.

Broadly speaking, however, the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone were the most vivid outward symbols of state collapse in the sub-region of West Africa. They were also among the fiercest and most savage in the history of postcolonial Africa. At the peak of the civil war in Liberia, about a third of the population was either displaced or was forced to flee to neighbouring countries as refugees. Sierra Leone is reported to have generated over 400,000 refugees¹⁴ during its ten-year civil war, while hundreds of thousands more were up-rooted from their homes in different parts of the country as internally displaced persons. Overall, the two wars not only earned West Africa the unenviable notoriety of being the most volatile sub-region on the continent in the 1990s, they also generated thousands of child soldiers who were involved in gross human rights abuses and impunity against the civilian population in the two countries. It has been estimated, perhaps conservatively, that over 20,000 child soldiers were involved in the first civil war in Liberia while the estimate for Sierra Leone stands at 10,000 (Sesay and Ismail 2003). While child soldiers in Liberia were accused of cannibalism, those in Sierra Leone were notorious for the horrifying hacking-off of the limbs of innocent civilians, women, children and even the elderly, as already noted, which was in blatant violation of accepted international rules of engagement and general conduct of hostilities, as enshrined in the 1949 and 1977 Geneva Conventions and related protocols.

All sides in the wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone contravened the Conventions although the degree varied between the government forces, on the one hand, and rebels, on the other. Individuals, groups and human rights organizations have documented many cases of violations in both countries. Testimonies obtained by human rights organizations and activists in Liberia can be equally extrapolated for Sierra Leone during the civil war years. According to *Human Rights Watch*, for instance, 13-year-old Gbandi from Popalahun in Liberia had this to say:

We'd been living with LURD people from March through August 2001 without much trouble. In early September we were attacked by AFL and fled into the bush. A few days later the AFL caught us and brought about eighty-five of us before Commander Zizemanza. He pointed at us and said: "you Gbandi people are the brothers and wives of the dissidents... We'll kill any Gbandi people we see so kill them... thirty people including my mother and sister, were tied with rope and put inside three houses. They begged, but the soldiers slapped them and told them to shut up. The soldiers lit the houses on fire, and stood guard at the doors to make sure our people didn't escape. After that, Zizemanza ordered about fifteen people to be killed — their throats were cut in the middle of the town square. They took the rest of us to Vahun and along the way set many villages on fire (<http://www.hrw.org/background/africa/sl.bck0226.htm>).¹⁵

A 17-year-old woman from Foya, Lofa County in Liberia, also testified:

I was caught after I ran away from my home with my grandmother. My grandmother was killed, and I lived for six months in the surrounding bush area. I was captured by two LURD rebels dressed in red t-shirt and red headbands who told me they were fighting the government. They told me that they would kill me if I resisted them, and they both raped me. After raping me, they left me bleeding. I was sick for a long time, and did not have my period for six months. Even now, I have pain in my stomach (Ibid.).

In Sierra Leone, the RUF and the renegade army of Johnny Paul Koroma as well as the Civil Defence Forces, especially the Kamajors, committed crimes similar to those in Liberia:

[There was] widespread and systematic sexual violence against women and girls including individual and gang rape, sexual assault with objects such as firewood, umbrellas and sticks, and sexual slavery (Ibid.).

As was the case in Liberia, some victims of the civil war in Sierra Leone were forced to execute or witness the execution of their parents, relatives or close friends. There were numerous cases of babies being amputated or having parts of their buttocks sliced off by rebel RUF forces.¹⁶ This chapter, as well as the one that immediately follows, examine the nexus between regime types and post-war reconstruction in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Charles Taylor's Electoral 'Victory', Post-war Reconstruction and Peace Building in Liberia

Liberia has had a bloody and haunted past and even more, a compelling post-civil war history. For instance, soon after the first round of the devastating ten-

year civil war ended in 1997, another spell of hardship, dictatorship and misrule again paved the way for the second outbreak of civil war, from 2000 to mid-2003. Observers of the turbulent and uncertain political terrain in that country would easily decipher the chain of factors that triggered the second insurrection by a group under the banner, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), later joined by another rebel group called Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL). The second civil war could be traced, in large part, to the haphazard and incomplete liquidation of the first war; a half-baked disarmament and demobilization, the refusal of Charles Taylor to form an army that is genuinely national in composition, outlook and orientation, and the wobbling post-war peace building, reconstruction and national reconciliation processes, to mention a notable few. Many relevant issues pertaining to these processes were either ignored outright or swept under the carpet by Taylor when he assumed office after controversial general elections in 1997 (Reno 1995: 109-120).

It is important to consider that prior to the first post-war elections in 1997; Taylor had achieved almost total military and administrative control of Liberia, except for the capital, Monrovia. He achieved this armed 'victory' through the ruthless activities of his large and overzealous rebel faction, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), which engaged in a reckless plundering of the natural resources and wealth of the country to earn hard currencies to procure arms for the war. Just before the elections, therefore, the situation on the ground was such that Taylor presented his compatriots and the international community with a fait accompli: to acquiesce to a dubious victory at the polls or to be content with a costlier military victory. Either way, Taylor knew that unless something drastic happened, his overriding ambition to become the next occupant of the Executive Mansion in Monrovia was only a matter of time and patience, two variables over which he had little control (Harris 1999: 431-455). On the sidelines, he seemed to have gauged correctly, that the international community was showing signs of weariness and frustration over what would turn out to be a half-hearted transition from war to peace in Liberia. Given the climate and mood in 1997, any form of compromise was acceptable to enable the international community to beat a tactical retreat from an exasperating situation.

When it was eventually resolved that the elections should go ahead as planned, the world community demonstrated its willingness to turn a blind eye to alleged massive electoral fraud perpetrated by Taylor and his National Patriotic Party of Liberia. There were even insinuations among Liberians interviewed during the field work that apart from turning a blind eye, international observers actively supported and allowed outcomes that were favourable to Taylor; for not to have done so would have meant prolonging their involvement with, and commitments to, a country that had become notorious for not having a central governing authority for almost a decade. It was evident in the buildup to and during the

elections, that none of the sixteen registered political parties had even a small fraction of the amount of resources available to Taylor's party, because he had amassed so much ill-gotten wealth from several years of illegal diamond mining and logging. No doubt, also, his followers within the ranks of the NPFL would simply have continued with their military campaign in the event of an unfavorable electoral outcome; a scenario that most Liberians no longer liked.

The final tally of the July 1997 Liberia General Elections recorded an overwhelming victory for Taylor's National Patriotic Party (NPP) with a total of 75.3 per cent of the votes, including 21 out of the 26 available seats and 49 out of 64 seats in the Senate and House of Representatives, respectively. The first runner up, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of the Unity Party (UP) won 9.57 per cent, with 3 seats in Senate and 7 in the House, while Alhaji Kromah's All Liberian Coalition Party (ALCOP) received 4 per cent of votes, 2 and 3 seats in the Senate and House respectively. Underlying these disparities, however, are other lingering problems some of which had perennially defined political and social change in the country. On the surface, for instance, it would seem that the long and firm political grip of the Americo-Liberian elite on the country had been terminated by the Doe coup of 1980, and therefore of limited, if any, relevance in 1997. A closer look however reveals the contrary, for apart from the continued existence of the weakened True Whig Party under the chairmanship of Rudolph E. Sherman, who also doubled as presidential candidate, several other political parties with predominant Americo-Liberian constituencies, including the Unity Party led by Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, were active. Secondly, the same political elites that had traditionally played a major role in the whimsical ups and downs of Liberian politics still featured prominently in the elections, even though from positions of relative weakness vis-à-vis Taylor and his NPP. The key players among indigenous Liberian politicians, included Togba Nah Tipoteh of the Liberian People's Party (LPP), George E. Boley of the National Democratic Party of Liberia (NDPL), H. Boimah Fahnbulleh of the Reformation Alliance Party (RAP), and of course, G. Baccus Matthews of the United People's Party (UPP) who had led the opposition against late President Tolbert in 1979.

Besides that, what followed, in terms of putting in place a workable framework for post-war peace building and reconstruction was fatally flawed in several ways. First, the peace initiative that finally ended the first round of civil war in 1997 was the unprecedented thirteenth attempt. All previous initiatives were blatantly repudiated at one time or another by the different armed factions, but almost consistently by Taylor's NPFL. Second, the terms of peace under the Abuja II Accord were such that too much emphasis was placed on power sharing, an arrangement that hitherto brought belligerent parties into government, despite its limitations (Sawyer 2004: 437-463). Third, the core concern was hold-

ing elections at all cost and as scheduled, rather than fashioning out an all-embracing post-war governance reform agenda. As Sawyer rightly noted:

[Fixing] the central state is important but insufficient. National elections can offer opportunities to retire unwanted leaders; but even this mode of citizen participation is insufficient for unleashing and utilizing the potential of the people of local communities as engines of governance and development, and providers of security (2004: 454).

The more fundamental challenge, according to Sawyer, was 'to reform (the existing) *political and non-political* institutions so that they deepen their legitimacy among the peoples of the sub-region and, where needed, create new institutions. . . . [However] such reforms often fall short of being rooted in local, provincial and cross-border populations' (2004: 458-9, our emphasis). Though the Abuja I and II Accords in 1995 and 1996 respectively were far-reaching, they nonetheless suffered several operational and environmental shortcomings. For example, the proviso that the different factions should encamp, disarm and demobilize was only observed in breach. Again, the stipulation that the remnants of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) be reconstituted to reflect the social, cultural and ethnic diversity of the country, under the supervision of ECOMOG, was not implemented. In the rush to hold elections, these booby traps were either overlooked or decidedly ignored with disastrous consequences for long-term, post-war peace and reconstruction in the country. Without any credible challenge from the opposition, it was smooth sailing for Taylor at the polls as he became the first post-war leader in Liberia.

In all of this, the mood within the international community did not help matters. There seemed to have been a tacit perception at that time that denying Taylor electoral victory might erode whatever gains that might have been achieved on the long and tortuous road to peace. It is also important to point out that Nigeria, the backbone behind the entire peace process in Liberia, was at this time not opposed to an electoral victory by Taylor, even though it was not openly acknowledged. Unfortunately, almost immediately after being declared the winner, Taylor repudiated one of the most important provisions of Abuja II, the restructuring of the AFL, claiming contemptuously that such a constitutional responsibility was legitimately that of the Commander-in-Chief (Moran and Pitcher 2004: 506). Since he understood the implications of a reformed AFL for his power base, it would have been foolhardy for Taylor to respect a clause that would effectively undermine his power. After all, the best guarantee for his regime's survival in the post-election years was to restructure the AFL in a manner that placed his diehard loyalists within the NPFL at the core of the new national army.

It was obvious that in a post-war country like Liberia which had experienced protracted violence and trauma, elections could only partly provide the tonic for a quick return to stability and peace. Thus, while the 1997 general elections became

a major milestone in the search for lasting peace in that war-torn country, it was definitely not the magical wand that would usher in a trouble-free democratic dispensation. That apart, Liberia was at that time- and now still is- a country bedeviled by severe post-war problems and complications: building lasting peace, disarming the ex-combatants, demobilizing and reintegrating ex-combatants into the civil society, revamping the battered national economy, constructing a platform and process for genuine national reconciliation, building a viable and democratic national polity, and addressing the root causes of the civil wars (Sawyer 1992). To compound the already daunting situation, the new government wasted little time in frustrating every opportunity that came its way to right the wrongs of the past. For instance, Taylor saw his victory as a *carte blanche* to punish those who opposed him during the violent civil war. Demonstrating pretence in its less refined form, he made initial gestures to the opposition by appointing some of them into his first cabinet. However, the gesture was short-lived, for he soon revealed his true intentions by easing them out of office. According to Jaye:

Like the regimes before him, Taylor took to pathological level the anomalies, viles and vices, which caused the war. His rule was characterized by political repression, severe economic mismanagement and corruption, social alienation of the mass of the people, and high degree of personal rule unprecedented in the history of the country (2003: 643-4).

A major problem that confronted the government and the country after Taylor's inauguration was that his regime could not fully de-link from the rapacious political economy of the recently concluded war. For example, Taylor circumvented international sanctions by dealing directly with companies and not governments, creating a situation that made it very difficult for sanctions to be effectively implemented against him (Aning 2003: 102-103). Even as president, therefore, Taylor found the lure of greed and crass accumulation irresistible. Sawyer rightly observed that even as president, the character and methods of Taylor's regime 'reflected the behaviour of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), the rebel force composed of networks of plundering, pillaging and murderous bands, including children, that operated under his direct control' — a sort of terrorist gang at the Executive Mansion (Sawyer 2004: 445). To the presidency, Taylor also brought his vast experience and questionable mercantile skills and networks from his days as the Director of the General Services Agency (GSA), the lucrative government department responsible for bulk purchase and distribution of essential commodities during the Samuel Doe era, to bear on his new network of clandestine business connections. He was unable to make the transition from a warlord to a statesman (Jaye 2003; Reno 1995). What he essentially did was incorporate the NPFL into the post-war AFL, and other national security agencies under different names. He also consolidated his hold on the country by putting his imprimatur on several important legislations that gave him the exclusive right

to preside over the lucrative mineral and agricultural sectors. Under the Strategic Commodity Act (Liberia) of 2000, for example, the president was 'granted the sole power to execute, negotiate and conclude all commercial contracts or agreements with any foreign or domestic investor for the exploitation of the strategic commodities of the Republic of Liberia' (Aning 2003; 104). Taylor's ascent to power, therefore, 'formalised the relationship between the underworld economy and the state; thus, rogue as well as legitimate elements in the global community found space to operate within the criminal state' (Sawyer 2004: 449).

Given this style of governance, it did not come as a surprise that Taylor's regime was hovering precariously on political quicksand, which affected his relationship with the international community, including the country's age-long benefactor, the United States. It was no secret that throughout his tenure, the international community treated him as a pariah, and at times even as a common criminal, whose tenure was marked by general impunity, bravado and brazen insincerity towards his people. Strangely, however, it took nearly three years for an international arms embargo to be slammed on his regime. In March 2001, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) imposed a range of sanctions on Liberia, including an embargo on the sale of diamonds from the country and international travel restriction on top government officials and their families. Significantly, the move was not a reaction to the ruthlessness with which he was treating his people, but to his role in destabilizing neighboring countries, especially Sierra Leone and Guinea.

Villain or Statesman? Charles Taylor and the International Community

The international community would perhaps have left Liberia to its fate and misfortunes, but for the destabilizing effect of Charles Taylor's subversive and destabilization activities in neighbouring countries, particularly Sierra Leone, Guinea and later, Cote d'Ivoire. Unlike Sierra Leone, Liberia did not enjoy much international support beyond a token United Nations presence. In contrast, the UN presence in Sierra Leone under the framework of United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) an estimated 17,000 personnel were on the global body's payroll, the largest UN deployment at that time. Also, while Sierra Leone was constantly a major issue within the UN, the Liberian civil war did not attract the attention of the UN Security Council until October 1992, more than two years after ECOMOG had been deployed in the country (Olonisakin 2004; Sesay 2000). Indeed, it was only when it became crystal clear in 2000 that Taylor was using proceeds from illicit diamond and logging to fund the RUF in Sierra Leone, that the UN Security Council introduced Resolution 1343 (2001) on 7 March imposing sanctions on Liberia (Aning 2003: 104). Furthermore, while a robust British military presence helped Sierra Leone to proceed with peace building in a relatively stable and secure post-war environment, Taylor's Liberia did

not enjoy the same luxury from its historic ally, the US, or from any other great power. One informed speculation is that the US would have withheld even its minimal involvement in Liberia in 2003 but for Washington's new war against terror following the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and other important landmarks in that country (Moran and Pitcher 2004: 516).

The relationship between Taylor and the international community was therefore decidedly cold for much of his presidency. By 2001, for instance, international humanitarian assistance to Liberia had plummeted to US\$30 million compared with US\$138 million in 1998, a year after Taylor became president. On rare occasions, when the international community attempted to engage with the government of Liberia, it was done in a manner that was predictably cautious and circumspect. For example, at a sponsored donor meeting co-chaired by the UN, the World Bank and the government of the Netherlands, which took place in Paris on April 7, 1998, the enormity of post-war reconstruction challenges in the country was acknowledged. However, of the estimated US\$220 million pledged by donors for a phased post-war reconstruction programme, very little was actually allocated to the Liberian government. In retrospect, it is apparent that key donors were not convinced by Taylor's public claim to pursue a government of inclusion, administrative and financial transparency, and fiscal discipline.

The frosty relations between Taylor and the international community were also evident in the undiplomatic exchange of accusations and insults. Taylor, on his part, accused some foreign countries, especially France and Italy, but also Spain, Portugal, Germany, Greece, Netherlands and Denmark, whose companies actively participated in the illegal but lucrative commercial business in Liberia, of helping to fuel the war. According to him, the real intentions of those countries, with some justification, were to gain access to the vast natural resources of Liberia, especially iron-ore, diamond and timber, and that these countries cared less about ending the second civil war which started in 2000. In December 2000, for example, the UN Security Council rejected a proposal to include timber on the list of sanctioned commodities due to strong objections from France and China, which accounted for 71 per cent of Liberia's timber exports in 2000 alone. As Patrick Alley of Global Witness observed:

These profits did not benefit the state but they provide the resources essential to CT's war machine. Unless this income is curtailed, regional security will be impossible. Timber-related jobs in Liberia are few, seasonal and insecure, other than those provided by expatriates. Sanctions will damage a warlord elite and a greedy industry far more than most Liberians already living in abject poverty in a land with virtually no infrastructure (Aning 2003: 102).

Luring a Drunken Man out of a China Shop: Charles Taylor's Exile and Its Effects on Post-war Reconstruction in Liberia

Under intense pressure from several African countries with support from the US, Taylor and his immediate household were forced into exile in Calabar, the capital of Cross River State, in southeastern Nigeria on August 11, 2003. Accompanying Taylor on the flight in a Nigerian government jet were five dignitaries: three African heads of state, President Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique, then chairman of the newly inaugurated African Union (AU), President John Kuffor of Ghana, the incumbent Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, as well as the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, and finally, the Chairman of the ECOWAS mediation team, former Nigerian military ruler, General Abdulsalami Abubakar. The manner of Taylor's forced exit from power and from Liberia could be compared to luring a drunken man out of a China shop, which thus conveys several scenarios, the most important being to cajole him out of Liberia, to prevent further damage to the country, and to put an end to the suffering of the people by carefully guiding him out of the 'Liberian china-shop'. Understandably, even the peacemakers were war weary. It is within the context of this illuminating imagery that we can begin to understand and appreciate the convergence of factors and forces in Taylor's rather peaceful exit from a country that he had mercilessly plundered for over a decade.

The irony of Taylor's rise and fall was that his Achilles heel, in the end, was external to Liberia. In June 2003, he was indicted by the Sierra Leone Special Court for his role in that country's civil war, and an international warrant for his arrest was promptly issued by the court. The timing of the court order for his arrest came as a surprise to many observers, because the Special Court never took regional leaders into confidence before the public announcement, a move that almost marred the peace talks that were already in session in Accra, Ghana. Beyond this, it was also unclear whether the Ghanaian government would have actually carried out the court order for his arrest. Still, Taylor's forced exit from the Liberian political scene was most unprecedented in the history of post-independence Africa, in several important respects. First, he accepted to leave only after he had truly run out of political support nationally, regionally and globally. Second, there was international consensus led by Washington and the UN that Taylor either abdicate office or face an international war crimes tribunal to answer charges for atrocities committed by the RUF in neighbouring Sierra Leone. Third, there were significant military advances by new rebel groups in Liberia, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) as well as the presence of ECOMOG troops and the 'body language' arising from the physical presence of US Navy and Marines off the Liberian coast (Moran and Pitcher 2004: 516).

It must be emphasized, nonetheless, that the manner of the exit itself was extraordinary. It was the first time that a sitting African head of state was eased out of office in such a high profile and dramatic manner in the continent, and accompanied by live television coverage. The most celebrated case previously was the unceremonious exit of the Ugandan tyrant, General Idi Amin Dada, who fled first to Nigeria and then to Saudi Arabia where he eventually died. Again, the caliber of the dignitaries that accompanied Taylor into his country of exile, Nigeria, clearly pointed to the intricate political and diplomatic maneuvers that preceded this important 'final solution' to the long-drawn crises of leadership and governance in war-torn Liberia under him. Closely related is the apparent legitimization of his exit not only by the continental influentials and power brokers, Nigeria and South Africa, but also by the regional and sub-regional institutions, the AU and ECOWAS respectively, and the global UN. This legitimization was consummated by their presence during the negotiations and onboard the plane that conveyed Taylor to Nigeria. That act, undoubtedly, imposed a sense of finality and irreversibility in the decision to ease Taylor out of power. It was guaranteed by the United Nations and the United States, although the latter still insisted that he had a case to answer before the International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague.

The fact that the major power brokers within and outside the continent of Africa sanctioned the exile of Charles Taylor may, in the long run, point toward the emergence of important new rules and conventions in the post-Cold War international system, namely: a) that a leader can no longer exercise absolute and punitive control over any country; b) that the man-made suffering of a people under a repressive regime will no longer escape the attention and opprobrium of major actors and ultimately, punishment by the international community; and c) that leaders accused of war-crimes and crimes against humanity are open to trial and punishment in regional tribunals or at the War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague, and could be imprisoned if found guilty.

While Taylor may have been a major problem afflicting Liberia, the benefit of hindsight shows that he was certainly not the only one, as Thomas Jaye argued when he contextualized the sense of insecurity and hopelessness that still pervades Liberia long after the exile of the former president (Jaye 2003: 643). With Taylor safely put away, and presently on trial at The Hague, however, the next important phase of the Accra peace deal, calling for the inauguration of a new transitional government, was implemented. On October 14, 2003, the new transitional government under the leadership of businessman and politician, Charles Gyude Bryant, took office with a mandate to run the affairs of state until general elections scheduled for October 2005.¹⁷

Liberia's Transitional Government: Post-war Reconstruction in a Limbo?

Although the renewed outbreak of war in 2000 served as the backdrop to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of October 2003 in Accra, Ghana, the peace conference that produced this framework is certainly a benchmark for measuring progress towards achieving lasting peace in post-Taylor Liberia. On the surface, Accra presented another chance for the war-torn country to jumpstart the daunting post-war reconstruction effort in an all-inclusive manner. For the first time, all the important stakeholders were present at the month-and-a-half long conference, and they all signed the agreement. Apart from appointing the chair and vice chair of the new National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL), the agreement also inserted a proviso that a Truth and Reconciliation Commission be inaugurated as an institutional facilitator of national reconciliation and national healing (Jaye 2003: 644-647).

The Agreement set out the composition of the proposed NTGL with a special mandate to conduct general elections within two years. However, whatever gains were made by the NTGL would not have been possible without the unexpected exile of Taylor, an event which significantly altered the political permutation on the ground. Although it was a welcome and expedient political move at the time, the temporal nature and lack of popular legitimacy of the transitional government weakened it considerably in a country where the scars of war were all too evident. Unfortunately, the NTGL did not help matters by dabbling into controversial issues which even a popularly elected government would have found too sensitive to pursue because of their far-reaching social, economic and political implications, including the renegotiation of contractual agreements with multinational concessionaries involved in the important rubber and mining sectors.¹⁸ However, it was not surprising, because the interim government and its chairman, Charles Gyude Bryant, were widely believed to be comprised of self-serving individuals keen on pursuing their own ends and lacking any serious commitment to instituting positive and enduring changes in the country. Nonetheless, given the constellation of forces and circumstances, the successful conduct of the October 2005 general elections was widely acknowledged as free and fair by local and international observers and was considered a major achievement by the NTGL (Harris 2006: 375-395).

Beyond October 2005: Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and the Future of Liberia

The October 2005 general elections broke the mould in the genre of post-war elections in Africa in several respects, not least because they produced the first female president in the continent, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. Other achievements of the interim government included the following: the unprecedented and complete disappearance of the rebel forces from the political process and the concomitant

presence of 15,000 UN peacekeepers, thus sparing the country damaging and costly electoral violence; the total absence of an overbearing incumbent political leadership, especially bearing in mind that the CPA barred the leadership of the NTGL from seeking political office under the new dispensation; and finally, public loyalty to the registered political parties on the part of the electorate prevented a situation whereby none of the political parties could lay claim to absolute control of the electioneering process (Harris 2006: 375-377). Still, the elections were held under conditions that may have short-changed the people, although not in a manner considered deliberate and systematic enough to undermine their credibility and acceptance. For instance, the timing during the rainy season made human and vehicular movement tedious, and even dangerous. There were also allegations of disenfranchisement, especially of a large number of refugees in neighbouring countries¹⁹ and internally displaced persons; this situation was partially rectified when voting was allowed in the camps during the presidential and vice presidential elections.

More importantly for the present purpose is the fact that political alignments on ground in Liberia in 2005 showed no significant departure from that of July 1997, except, of course, that Taylor was no longer a force to reckon with directly. This point was reflected in part by the political alignment witnessed before and during the two elections, and by the way that registered political parties followed long-standing ethnic divisions. One of the notable new entrants in 2005 was George Weah, erstwhile international footballer and flag bearer of the Congress for Democratic Change (CDC). Apart from that, many of the old brigades in Liberian politics featured prominently during both elections, either as candidates, party leaders or simply as godfathers, including Togba Nah Tipoteh, George E. Boley, H. Boimah Fahnbulleh, Rudolph E. Sherman, G. Baccus Matthews, J. Rudolf Johnson and, the eventual winner, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. Without any perceptible shifts in the ideological leanings of the key political parties and figures, there was no expectation for any significant shift in the way politics was played out in the country.

In the first round of the presidential polls, George Weah led with 28.3 per cent of total votes cast, garnering much of his support from the eastern half of the country. The first runner-up, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of the Unity Party (UP), received 19.8 per cent of the votes, mainly from the western regions of the country. Charles Walker Brumskine of Liberty Party (LP), Winston Tubman of the National Democratic Party of Liberia (NDPL) and Harry Varney Sherman of the Coalition for Transformation of Liberia (COTOL) followed with 13.9 per cent, 9.2 per cent and 7.8 per cent votes, respectively. Thus, aside from George Weah who came into the race without prior political experience, the other top contenders had been principal interlocutors in Liberia's past and recent political histories. Indeed, the four top candidates have had familial and political connec-

tions with the tiny but influential Americo-Liberian dynasty that ruled the country with absolute power for more than a century from 1847 until 1980.

With the inability of any political parties to muster a clear majority, a run-off election was held on November 8 between the candidates of the two leading parties, Johnson-Sirleaf of the Unity Party and Weah of the CDC. Despite the relatively poor turnout of voters during the November 8 run-off, 61 per cent compared to 74.8 per cent of voters in October, it produced a serious political upset with Johnson-Sirleaf taking 59.4 per cent of votes while Weah received 40.6 per cent. Benefiting from the large turnout of female voters, estimated at nearly 50 per cent of the total electorate, Johnson-Sirleaf won the second round of voting with a clear majority from the western region, home to majority of the Americo-Liberians (Harris 2006: 431-455). On November 23, the National Electoral Commission announced Johnson-Sirleaf as winner of the presidential elections. Weah initially protested that the process was fraught with electoral malpractices, despite contrary claims by domestic and international observers including former US President Jimmy Carter. His protest was withdrawn on December 22, paving way for the inauguration of the new president in January 2007.²⁰

Rather than precipitate a decidedly clean break with the Americo-Liberian dynasty, however, the elections merely reasserted it. In particular, Johnson-Sirleaf was the epitome of Americo-Liberian dynastic resilience and rebirth since she had the longest relationship with the True Whig Party, then the sole political party of the Americo-Liberians. Coming from a mixed background of Americo-Liberian and indigenous parentage, she became a staunch member of the dominant True Whig Party, including serving as finance minister under Tolbert in the late 1970s. She fled the country after the 1980 coup and worked for several years at major international institutions such as the UN and the World Bank. In and out of government and the country, however, Johnson-Sirleaf remained a key player in Liberia's politics during and after the civil wars. Although she was known to have briefly supported Taylor's attempt to overthrow Doe, perhaps in revenge for the coup that toppled her former mentor, Tolbert, she returned to contest the general elections of 1997 against Taylor under the platform of the Unity Party. While Johnson-Sirleaf lost by a wide margin of 9.5 per cent compared to Taylor's 75. per cent, her political position was bolstered during the October 2005 general elections, with the emergence of twenty-two political parties to contest the presidential and legislative elections along a variety of ethno-regional lines.

If the background, charisma and personality of the new leader are the major determinants of international support for a country that has recently emerged from a period of protracted violence, then Liberia would have been the darling of the donor community under Johnson-Sirleaf. At home and abroad, the inauguration of the new president was widely hailed, because she was perceived as coming to office with the requisite training, professional background and experi-

ence as well as enormous international goodwill. In her inauguration speech, the new president committed her administration to vigorously pursuing the daunting tasks of post-war reconciliation, reconstruction and accelerated national reconciliation and development. However, it is not likely that the far-reaching changes which Liberians and friends of the country enthusiastically yearned for would be easily realized given the enormity of the challenges facing the country. Indeed, a radical change in the way things have often been done, and in the lives of the ordinary Liberian man and woman in the country, may not come soon, since the oligarchic patterns of authority and privileges, as well as cronyism, have remained largely intact under the new dispensation.

Although Johnson-Sirleaf has demonstrated some independence, nevertheless having assumed a leading position within the controversial political hierarchy of the past, especially within the Americo-Liberian dominated True Whig Party, she is not likely to pursue radical policies that could undermine or work against the privileged Americo-Liberian class in the country. Already, there is nascent public outcry against the administration for its double-standard in letting-off prominent government officials accused of corrupt practices, rather than bringing them to justice. Apart from striving to win the confidence of key opposition figures to avoid contentious political deadlocks, the administration has also had to contend with several odd post-election paradoxes, especially bearing in mind that different political parties controlled the leadership positions in the bicameral legislature (i.e. House of Representatives and the Senate) and Executive Mansion, the seat of government in Monrovia. As presently composed, the CDC has the highest number of seats, 18 out of 94, or 19 per cent, of the total in both Houses, while independent candidates and representatives of smaller and regional parties combined won 27 seats, or 29 per cent of total seats. Finally, Johnson-Sirleaf's Unity Party holds only 12 seats, or 13 per cent of the total, thus leaving it, oddly enough, as the major opposition party in the current Senate. With potentially profound and varied impacts on the fragile polity, the broad-based legislative opposition could either work with the president or against her, depending on how her government treats other parties.

There is no doubt that after one and half decades of very devastating civil wars, critical challenges would confront any post-war government in Liberia, including that of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. These challenges include the following: achieving, deepening and sustaining national reconciliation; guaranteeing the security of the citizens by strengthening the rule of law, especially outside Monrovia where the writ of government is very limited and tenuous; and, enhancing the capacity of the post-war administration to implement policies that would provide for, and secure, the vital livelihoods of the people, by emphasizing human security and revitalizing the collapsed economy, especially the agriculture and mining sectors (Adejumobi 2007: 19-21). Even more instructive is the

clamour that the new Liberia should devolve more powers and authority to municipal and local institutions, and ensure fiscal prudence and transparency in the use of scarce national resources.

While Johnson-Sirleaf's presidency has brought considerable respite to her compatriots and sanity to Liberia in general, it remains to be seen how far she is willing and able to drive the reform process. For sure, the government has been able to restore some sense of political order and institutional legitimacy, which were completely destroyed during the protracted civil war and during Taylor's reign of terror. Unlike the latter, whose leadership was marked by authoritarian political tendencies, as witnessed by the larger than life profile of the president and NPP, the administration of Johnson-Sirleaf is clearly more tolerant of opposition parties and elements, many of whom are still active and well-respected in Liberian politics.²¹ This welcome change is exemplified in the recent June 2007 pact reached by eight political parties within the framework of the Forum for Political Party Leaders (FOPPAL).²² The group committed its members to regular inter-party consultations and meetings aimed at consensus building on key national issues, so as to constructively engage the government. Significantly, a long-standing and well-respected politician, Gabriel Baccus Matthew of the United Peoples Party, was appointed the chairman emeritus of the Forum.

In spite of these encouraging developments, it is difficult to be upbeat about the future of the country for several important reasons. There remains a lingering concern over security from two dimensions: first, the inability of government to ensure and enforce internal discipline within the law enforcement services; and, second, doubt over the capacity of the security services to ensure public safety, and law and order. There is also the tasking problem of improving public health and municipal services. For a long time, waste disposal was a major environmental and health hazard across the country, particularly in Monrovia. These problems are overwhelming for the government alone to tackle effectively, hence the appeal to key operators in the private sector and the international community to partner with government. Partly in response to this call, Mittal Steel Liberia Limited, a subsidiary of the world's largest steel manufacturer ArcelorMittal, has reportedly embarked on the restoration of essential municipal services and infrastructure in Buchanan, in Grand Bassa County and Yekepa in Nimba County, focusing on the following: water storage and supply networks, sewerage treatment, storm water drainage and the power supply system.²³ In June 2007, the World Bank extended an additional grant of US\$8.5 million to develop the country's health sector. At the time of writing in July 2007, a total of 15,000 UN peacekeepers — one of the most expensive operations embarked upon by the UN since 1945 — remained in the country to maintain peace and provide other essential services.²⁴ These gestures are clearly indicative of the enhanced goodwill enjoyed by the Johnson-Sirleaf administration in tackling the enormous tasks of

post-war reconstruction in Liberia. However, the international community needs to do more in Liberia, if the post-war reconstruction programmes and policies of the government are to be consummated in an all-inclusive and sustainable manner.

It is significant that Johnson-Sirleaf's administration has had to rely on the benevolence of friendly countries²⁵ and the international community to meet pressing domestic priorities. At the 2007 G8 summit in Heiligendamm, Germany, the group committed itself towards financing debt relief and development packages for Liberia, and to cover 90 per cent of the country's debt under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiatives.²⁶ Unfortunately, but predictably, there has been a huge gap between international pledges of assistance and eventual disbursements, a situation that makes national planning particularly frustrating for a post-war government in a poor country like Liberia. Johnson-Sirleaf's administration seems to be keen on creating an enabling environment for foreign investors, but on terms that would be favourable to the country.

Notably, the first Executive Order signed by the president was the revocation of all timber concessions, followed by a review of contracts with major multinational companies in the rubber and mining sectors, including the controversial long-term deals signed by the transitional government of Bryant.²⁷ The newly elected government has embarked on a comprehensive review of the terms of the agreements with two major multinational concessions: the tyre giant, Firestone, which maintains its largest rubber plantation covering 118,000 acres in Harbel, close to Robertsfield International Airport, and Mittal Steel Liberia Limited, a subsidiary of ArcelorMittal, which is involved in iron ore mining in the country. Although these companies are major employers of labour and veritable sources of badly needed national revenue, the significance of the new deal is best appreciated against the backdrop of substantial evidence that multinational companies played an active but ignominious role in plundering the natural resources of the country, and in indemnifying corruption among Liberia's small but influential political and economic elite. Importantly, Global Witness, an world renowned lobby group, has already berated the iron ore deal which allows Mittal to flout human rights and environmental laws in the country. According to Global Witness, the contract worth almost US\$1 billion, would not only short-change Liberia, but also would make Mittal unaccountable to the Liberian government.²⁸

Ultimately, progress in post-war reconstruction depends on the government's sincerity, commitment and focus. Two key areas are in dire need of closer attention: promoting national reconciliation, and ensuring transparency and accountability by political and non-political office holders on fiscal matters. There is no doubt that the task of promoting genuine national reconciliation is paramount among government's priorities given the widespread violence and impunity that marked the civil wars. In a recent report titled *'Liberia: Time for Truth, Justice and*

Reparation for Liberia's Victims? Amnesty International (2007) challenged the government to develop and implement a comprehensive plan to address impunity for serious crimes committed in the past, and to ensure that victims' needs are made an important priority for government. Although Liberia is reported to be collaborating with foreign partners to establish a transitional justice system like that in neighbouring Sierra Leone, Amnesty believes that initiative should go further, since it is far from comprehensive and effective as it is presently being implemented. Finally, the human rights advocacy and protection agency expressed concern that a gap remains in government's demonstrated commitment to addressing impunity, given the absence of a systematic process for investigating human rights violations and abuses, and lack of witness protection and reparation plans. Finally, Amnesty raised questions regarding the following: the capacity, indeed commitment, of government to sustain the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and to implement its decisions; the extent to which the justice and security sectors are being reformed and equipped to better protect human rights and prevent further impunity; and, lastly, whether government could muster the political will and financial resources to establish and adequately fund an independent human rights commission.

On the important issue of fiscal transparency, the recent report by the General Auditing Commission (GAC) of the Office of the Auditor General of Liberia, is of immediate and serious concern as it was very critical of the government's 2007 draft national budget presented to the national legislature. The report noted that whereas increased public benefits in the areas of salary, health, education, county development and poverty reduction are evident, the new budget signaled Liberia's worst financial nightmare, because government is not sufficiently opening itself to independent audit as recommended by the UN Panel of Experts. Despite the lack of expertise and resources to carry out an effective audit of government's fiscal mandates, this limitation did not undermine the main conclusions that there is an urgent need for more transparency in government business.²⁹ In the context of Liberia's harsh economic and social conditions, there are widespread allegations that government is not doing enough to alleviate the plight of the ordinary people.³⁰ Those who criticise government on this premise point readily to the high unemployment rate of 80 per cent, as well as alleged cases of corruption by influential individuals with close ties to government. In a direct attack on the policies of the Unity Party-led government of Johnson-Sirleaf, a notable clergyman and pastor of the Christ Pentecostal Church, Reverend T. Dixon, claimed that only officials of the party and government are thriving while the majority of Liberians face many hardships. Even among ex-combatants, a particularly dangerous group by virtue of their long exposure to violence, dangerous drugs, firearms and actual combat, there are bitter complaints that government is not doing enough in terms of vocational and technical education, and

in addressing the deficiencies of the reintegration and rehabilitation components of the DDRR program.³¹

Government's inability to address these concerns, especially those of ex-combatants and the mass of unemployed Liberians, may partly explain its faltering moves in effectively maintaining security of life and property. An indication that government is overwhelmed by the still precarious security situation in the country was the Justice Ministry's call on residents, especially those within Monrovia, to embark on self-help security arrangements rather than relying on state security services, which have proved inadequate in dealing with the upsurge in criminal activities. Although the appeal has prompted the setting up of vigilante groups to ensure neighbourhood security, gangs like the Issaka Boys, a notorious gang of armed robbers, continue to operate with ferocity.³²

For whatever it was worth, heeding the Ministry's call to set up private security arrangements in Liberia could have grave and worrisome long-term implications. This is partly because the call may send the wrong signal to individuals and groups with dubious intentions to hijack the process and further complicate the tenuous security situation in the country. Also, the call could undermine whatever strategies the police and other security agencies,³³ including the 15,000 strong UN peacekeepers, already have in place to enhance security of life and property in the country. There remains a critical question: if government is still overwhelmed by the security situation despite the presence of a large UN contingent, what will be fate of the country when the peacekeepers eventually depart and the newly formed Armed Forces of Liberia assume full responsibility for national security? Recent experiences in the sub-region suggest that such internal insecurity issues could spill out of control, if not properly handled, with devastating consequences for neighbouring countries. With limited resources at the disposal of government—whose annual budget was only US\$129 million in 2006—coupled with the magnitude of the challenges currently facing the country, these criticisms may appear too harsh.³⁴ Ultimately, whether Liberia is able to get out of its present predicament successfully, and within a short time, will depend on the sustainability of external support. Will the international community readily oblige? Only time will tell.

Regime Types and Post-war Reconstruction in Sierra Leone

Tejan Kabbah and Post-war Reconstruction in Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone offers another appropriate case study for understanding and reflecting on the important nexus between the nature and character of leadership and the success of post-war reconstruction, at least between 1997 and 2003 when President Charles Taylor was in power. Unlike Liberia, where there was less international enthusiasm for post-war reconstruction, the international community invested an enormous amount of time, effort and resources in Sierra Leone's post-war reconstruction efforts. Whilst a good number of reasons have been advanced for this unprecedented international interest in the country, the character and style of leadership, and how such post-war leadership is perceived by the international community play a crucial role in this calculus. Unlike Taylor, President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, who assumed the mantle of political leadership of the country in 1996, was not a warlord turned president. He was only unfortunate to have inherited the war, the result of long years of authoritarian one-party and military dictatorships. As a democratically and popularly elected leader, he carried more national and international clout than Taylor in neighbouring Liberia and was easily able to attract both national and international post-war reconstruction support.

This point is important because one of the distinguishing features of international politics since the 1990s is that sit tight regimes, 'presidents for life', or assuming power through the 'barrel of a gun' are now frowned at by the international community. The trend is for regimes to be seen as transiting to democratic governance through free and fair elections. Given the general perception of Kabbah and his regime as democratic, it was not surprising that the global community overwhelmingly approved the deployment of a 17,500 peace keeping force by the UN. The reasons for this unprecedented international involvement in the country's post-war reconstruction will become clearer subsequently. It is important to

emphasize that Sierra Leone, like many countries transitioning from war to peace, is confronted with numerous post-war challenges. Some of these challenges include the revitalization of the collapsed national economy and fragile governance structures, the disarmament and reintegration of ex-fighters, repatriation and reintegration of internally displaced persons and refugees, the management of transitional justice and security sector reforms. Attempts by both national and international actors to address these important challenges have been marked by varying degrees of success over the years. The rest of the chapter examines the nature and character of the post-war regime that emerged in Freetown and how the personality and background of Kabbah were important factors in galvanizing international interest and support for the country's post-war reconstruction recovery.

In order to appreciate the attitude to, and disposition of, the international community towards Sierra Leone, there is need to reflect, albeit briefly, on the background of its post-war president, Ahmed Tejan Kabbah. He was born on February 16, 1932 at Pendembu in the Kailahun District of eastern Sierra Leone. His father, Abu Bakarr Sidique Kabbah, an ethnic Madingo, was born at Rogbolon, a riverine town in Kambia District, in northern Sierra Leone. His great grandfather, Alpha Mohamed Kabba-Bah, who hailed from Kankan in Guinea, was an Islamic scholar running a major and popular centre of Islamic learning in that town (Leigh n.d.: 6). His family's religious background accounts, among other things, for the president's strong attachment to the Islamic faith. Kabbah's mother hailed from Mobai Town, Kailahun District, in eastern Sierra Leone (Leigh n.d.: 8). For our purpose, this genealogy brings to the fore the strong claims that the president has to two of the most important regions of the country, the north and the east. He has also demonstrated proficiency in five of the major national languages: Mende, Temne, Madingo, Susu and Creole. While Mende and Temne belong to the two largest ethnic groups in the country, Creole is the lingua franca. On the basis of these ethno-linguistic factors, one could claim that the president has the credentials, as it were, to promote ethnic and regional unity in a country whose socio-political fabric had been torn apart by a long and atrocious civil war.

President Kabbah attended the St. Edwards Secondary School in Freetown and proceeded to the University College of Wales in the United Kingdom to study economics and later law. He completed his law studies at Gray's Inn, London and was called to the Bar. Patricia Kabbah, the president's wife, also received a degree in law, and worked in the United Nations' system for many years. In other words, the couple were not only well educated, but also had the relevant national and international exposures to position them advantageously for playing a meaningful role in Sierra Leone's post-war governance agenda and reconstruction processes (Leigh: 14). In terms of work experience, President Kabbah had extensive national and international careers, with the requisite professional connections, before assuming the mantle of leadership in 1996. Beginning as deputy

secretary in the Prime Minister's office during the colonial period, he rose quickly to the influential position of district commissioner and served in Bombali, Moyamba and Kambia Districts. During this period, he gained considerable on-the-job experience in local and national issues, and his political career climaxed when he became permanent secretary in the Ministries of Trade and Industry, and Education.

On the international scene, Kabbah joined the United Nations in New York in 1971 as deputy chief of the West Africa Division and was largely responsible for putting in place the agenda for UN assistance to West African States. From this vantage point, he approved the first UN assistance to the Mano River Union, a loose tripartite body linking Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, with Headquarters in Freetown (Gbla and Rugumamu 2003). In 1973, he was appointed Resident UNDP Representative to the Kingdom of Lesotho, and in 1976, he was posted to the United Republic of Tanzania. More importantly, perhaps, he was charged with drawing up the reconstruction programme of war-torn Uganda after the fall of Idi Amin in 1979. Finally, prior to Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, Kabbah was assigned the responsibility of developing a blueprint for the UN's cooperation with the then white supremacist Rhodesian government under Ian Smith. In that capacity, he successfully organized a donor's conference to anticipate and address the problems and needs of the newly independent Zimbabwe. Kabbah was also deputy director of personnel, and later personnel director, at the UN headquarters, positions that greatly enhanced his international experience, stature, exposure and networks that were very handy when he became president in 1996.

After his retirement from the United Nations, he was made chairman of the twenty member National Advisory Committee set up by the then ruling National Provisional Military Council (NPRC) under Captain Valentine Strasser, which was saddled with, among many others, the task of working out the modalities for a quick return to multi-party democracy that would ensure broader and equitable participation of the citizenry in the political processes. It is noteworthy that the work of this important Committee, paved way for the preparation and presentation of the draft 1991 Constitution.

It is obvious from the above that Kabbah's background, extensive national and international connections and experience, were eventually to serve him very well in winning the confidence of the international community in attending to the country's daunting post-conflict recovery programmes and tasks. Not surprisingly, it was widely believed in many quarters in Freetown, that Kabbah was strongly supported by UNDP and other UN agencies during the elections.

Kabbah's SLPP emerged victorious among the thirteen political parties that contested the 1996 presidential and parliamentary elections, having won outright, both the presidential and parliamentary elections by polling 70.1 and 69.9 per cent of the votes, respectively. He formally assumed power in March 1996 as the

democratically elected president of war-ravaged Sierra Leone. Equivocally, the way and manner in which Sierra Leoneans demonstrated their determination to end authoritarian single party and military rule — as demonstrated by the overwhelming defeat of the APC — was widely hailed by the international community and donor agencies as an important triumph for democracy. Thus, at the conclusion of the peace agreement between the government and the rebel RUF in November 1996 in Abidjan, there was already a palpable mood of optimism that the process of restoring peace and economic prosperity would soon commence in the country.

A Brief Assessment of Tejan Kabbah's Presidency

What, then, are the implications of the linkages between President Kabbah's standing nationally and internationally and his performance as leader of war-torn Sierra Leone in its state of international receivership? There is a perception among some members of the elite and a growing number in the general public in the country as well, that the president did not put his enormous national and international experience into good use in addressing the country's post-war efforts. Those who held this view argued that his long years in the UN system deprived him the opportunity of fully appreciating the complex and intricate political realities in contemporary Sierra Leone. This, in part, is reflected in his leadership style which is patently bureaucratic and out of touch with what could be regarded as the street conditions in post-war Sierra Leone. A keen observer of the socio-cultural scene in the country, Luseni Wanjama described the president's performance this way:

The tragedy of Sierra Leone is the catastrophic failure of leadership, compounded by Kabbah's government, which is increasingly out of step with the pulse of the nation (*For Di People*, July 27, 2005: 3).

In fact, some of the expectations of Sierra Leoneans with regard to the president's ability to propel the country's post-conflict peace building project were soon thwarted as the government settled in to face the numerous tasks before it. After the 1996 elections, for example, Kabbah appointed a twenty-two member cabinet drawn mainly from strong supporters of the victorious SLPP. Although the action was not unconstitutional, it nevertheless failed to reflect the spirit of an all-inclusive administration and ongoing reconciliation processes in post-war Sierra Leone. This point is particularly significant, given the work of the Truth Commission, which tried to bring about national reconciliation between victims and perpetrators. Furthermore, the first cabinet did not reflect the fact that some of the thirteen political parties that contested the elections also had strong supporters in some very important constituencies in the country. Thus, the expectation was that the president would be pragmatic by reaching out to the opposition in a true government of national unity. Such a move would have been seen not only as truly reconciliatory, but would have also provided a platform for healing

some of the wounds of the past and, in particular, that of political exclusion, regarded as one of the major causes of the civil war in the first place. It would appear that the president narrowly interpreted inclusiveness by only taking into account regional balances, age and gender. This move was seen as grossly inadequate in a country that had deep-rooted political and social fault-lines mainly derived from the violent and bestial eleven-year-old war. Put differently, the president's cabinet and government's general behaviour were typical of the old and unhealthy winner-takes-all politics (Appiah-Mensah 2002).

The president's commitment to post-war reconstruction and national recovery had been articulated very clearly in his swearing-in speech delivered at the Parliament Building on March 29, 1996, and in many subsequent addresses to Parliament, thus making people believe that he was truly determined to tackle some of the fundamental factors that precipitated the civil war in 1991. He acknowledged in the inauguration speech, for example, the monumental task facing his government given the large scale destruction caused by the war, including the deaths of thousands of innocent citizens, unprecedented crude amputations and mutilations, massive displacements of some citizens, trauma, the callous destruction of physical and social infrastructure,³⁵ the unparalleled disruption of agricultural and mining activities and general acts of impunity, and other forms of lawlessness committed by rebel RUF forces in many parts of the country. In line with the premium placed on the need for a comprehensive programme of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) of former fighters in the Abidjan and Lome Peace Accords of 1996 and 1999 respectively, the president reiterated government's commitment to a detailed DDR strategy side-by-side with a comprehensive programme of rehabilitation and reconstruction in the country.³⁶

Consequently, government published two major and detailed documents that defined its strategy for grappling with the enormous challenges of post-conflict peace building and reconstruction. First, was the National Resettlement, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation (RRR) programme in 1997, and the second was the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programme during the following year. The two documents targeted mainly former fighters and war affected communities through various DDR and rehabilitation and reintegration activities. To effectively oversee the implementation of these programmes, government established the National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (NCDDR), and the National Commission for Reconstruction, Resettlement and Rehabilitation now known as the National Commission for Social Action (NacSA). The NCDDR, working closely with the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), succeeded in disarming and demobilizing an estimated total of 72,490 ex-combatants and in recovering 42,300 weapons and 1.2 million rounds of ammunition (Malan 2003).

Although many ex-combatants did not come forward with their arms for fear of stigmatisation, among other considerations, the DDR programme was largely successful because it was able to disarm the various warring factions, i.e. the RUF, the Civil Defence Forces (CDF), and the Armed Forces of the Republic of Sierra Leone (AFRSL). The DDR programme also facilitated the successful transition to democracy in 2002 by providing a congenial and secure environment for the presidential and parliamentary elections and for other post-war recovery activities. The overall success of the programme could be attributed to a variety of important reasons and factors, including the democratic character of the Kabbah administration itself and the positive perception of his person and government, in general. Unlike Charles Taylor, who did not enjoy wide international support and acceptance, President Kabbah enjoyed tremendous external support because he was, by and large, perceived and presented as a committed democrat and a seasoned administrator with enviable international credentials. Consequently, the international community, loosely defined, provided strong support for his post-war reconstruction programmes. As early as 1996 and 1997, the donor community had no hesitation in approving the country's Quick Action Programme (QUAP), supported by a pledge of US\$154 million, which was later reaffirmed at the consultative meeting in Geneva.³⁷ However, it is unclear how much of this money was actually released to the government.

Also central to the Kabbah-led SLPP regime's relatively successful post-war reconstruction programme, in comparison with the abysmal performance of Charles Taylor in neighbouring Liberia, was the reconstruction of the state both at the centre and at the local government levels. The National Good Governance and Public Service Reform Programme launched in 1997 featured decentralization and local government reform as appropriate and mandatory strategies for the effective delivery of public services to the people at the grassroots. The main objectives of local government decentralization by the programme were envisaged as follows: a) providing relatively free access to the machinery of government and b) giving the electorate greater democratic control over the development of their local communities by bringing decision making closer to the people.³⁸ In other words, government's reform programme recognized local government administration as the cornerstone for providing basic services to the majority of people, in order to kick start economic growth in the rural areas and spread participatory democracy to the grassroots.³⁹

In order to successfully implement the decentralization programme, government created the new Ministry of Local Government and Community Development, with the primary responsibility of coordinating the decentralization and local government reform programme in the country. To consolidate the reforms, the August 2002 UNDP and Government of Sierra Leone Multi-Donor Governance Round Table recommended the creation of a Task Force on Decentrali-

zation and Local Governance with the vice president as its chairman. The Task Force subsequently drafted the Local Government Act that was enacted into law in February 2004. This landmark legislation not only gave local councils substantial autonomy in financial and human resources management, but also demanded transparency and accountability in their operations. Finally, the Act recognized the crucial role of effective leadership, especially at the centre, in the implementation of the local government reform programme. Accordingly, it made provision for the creation of an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Decentralization and Local Government, again under the chairmanship of the vice president, and a Decentralization Secretariat, as a Directorate of the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development. The government also successfully conducted relatively free and fair elections into the Freetown city council, five town councils and thirteen district councils. The replacement of management committees at the local government level with elected councilors was a commendable initiative aimed at promoting participatory local governance so that the citizens, especially poor rural dwellers, could participate uninhibited in local decision-making processes. In spite of these apparent innovations, however, not much changed in practical terms, in the way the country was run under the Kabbah administration.

As was widely anticipated, government also prioritised security sector reform in its post-war reconstruction programme. Thus the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (IPRSP) and the Draft Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) emphasized the need for secure, peaceful and stable post-conflict socio-political and economic environments. Consequently, the two documents envisioned a national security environment with well-trained, well-equipped and highly motivated security forces. As if to underpin this reform strategy, the president had earlier reiterated his commitment to improving the security of the state and of life and property during the official opening of the Parliament on May 22, 1998, with a pledge to 'take the security of the country as my number one priority and ... intend to pursue it with all necessary vigour'.⁴⁰ Although informed by the exigencies of the times, Kabbah's commitment to a comprehensive security sector reform agenda cannot be divorced from the events of 1997 when a security breach led to a short military interregnum under Major Johnny Paul Koroma. The restoration of his government in 1998, after the brief military interlude, was followed by a strong national resolve to pursue a vigorous security sector reform programme in the country (Gbla 2004).

Internationally, the security sector reform programme had strong support from the UK through the Department for International Development (DFID), the Ministry of Defence, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the UK-led International Military Advisory Training Team (IMATT). In that regard, the experiences of other African countries like South Africa were very useful in the implementation of the security sector reforms. Furthermore, ECOMOG and

UNAMSIL played visible roles in the security sector reform process, mainly targeting the armed forces, police, judiciary, the Parliament and the intelligence services. The main thrusts of the reform in the various sectors are as follows:

- Ministry of Defence: to ensure that the army remains subordinated and accountable to the democratically elected government in Freetown;
- Police: to create and sustain a civilian controlled police force capable of keeping the peace countrywide;
- Intelligence services: to ensure that their accountability to the government, and coordination by the Office of National Security (ONS) based in Freetown;
- Judiciary: to underpin relatively free access to justice for all and to give teeth to the government's Anti-Corruption Commission.

The British government was particularly interested in securing a post-conflict, stable democratic government in Sierra Leone by ensuring that all the country's social institutions and agencies remained functional and reliable.

Agents or Obstacles of National Reconciliation? The Special Court and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Sierra Leone

With strong prompting from the international community, Kabbah's government established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the Special Court in pursuit of transitional justice. Both institutions, it must be stressed, were by-products of the Lome Accord of 1999. Article 1 of the Statute of the Special Court stipulated that one of its mandates was

to prosecute person who bear the greatest responsibility for serious violations of international humanitarian law and Leonean law committed in the territory of Sierra Leone since November 30, 1966, including those leaders who, in committing such crimes, have threatened the establishment of and implementation of the peace process in Sierra Leone.⁴¹

Article 2 of the Court's Statute listed crimes against humanity to include the following: murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, imprisonment, torture, rape sexual, slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy and any other form of sexual violence, persecution on political, racial, ethnic or religious grounds and finally, other inhuman acts (Ibid.). This comprehensive list could, if properly utilised, form the basis for the trial of many of the prominent actors in the civil war, including rebels and pro-government forces, especially the Civil Defence Force.

Apart from using established international criminal law as applicable in war situations, the Court was also to use the existing laws of Sierra Leone, thereby making it a hybrid agency unlike other international tribunals such as the one set up to prosecute perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide. This hybridity had serious

implications for the work of the TRC which was to establish the truth with regard to the violence that took place during the ten-year civil war and related crimes. At one level, the two agencies were at variance with each other with respect to their mandates. The tension became obvious when some of the perpetrators stayed away from the TRC, for fear that a confession made there could be used against them by the Special Court. This partly explained why most of the *dramatis personae* in the civil war did not appear before the Truth Commission. But that was only one of the several problems that plagued the Special Court. Another was its poor funding, which delayed its take-off and significantly affected its activities. Furthermore, providing adequate security for those that were to stand trial proved equally problematic, which was one reason why Charles Taylor had to be transferred to the International Tribunal in The Hague. Yet another constraint was the cut-off date of the Special Court's mandate, primarily focusing on crimes committed in 1996 in the context of a war that started in 1991. It is difficult to understand why the first five years of the war were not included in the Court's mandate, because many of the crimes listed in Article 2 of the Statute were certainly committed long before 1996. The unnecessary gap gave the impression that the Court would not be able to do a thorough job, especially in the eyes of those whose loved ones were victims of war crimes and other forms of violence.

The crisis of confidence in the Special Court was compounded by the death of Foday Sankoh, leader of the RUF, and easily the most prized accused, before he could be arraigned, as well as the surprising arrest and detention of Sam Hinga Norman, leader of the pro-government Civil Defence Force and one time minister in Kabbah's government. Again, his subsequent death in detention further undermined the integrity and work of the Court, especially among his ethnic Mende group as well as members of the public, who believed that his Kamajor forces played an important role in the defence and eventual survival of Kabbah's government. In fact, many Sierra Leoneans are of the view that Norman was a hero of sorts because of his role in taking on the RUF at the time when even the armed forces were in total disarray. Again, other prominent members of the RUF/AFRC junta, such as Johnny Paul Koroma and Sam Bockarie, alias mosquito, were never brought to trial. Bockarie too died in exile while the whereabouts of Koroma are uncertain, although many believe he might also be dead. In other words, with the exception of the recent arrest and detention of Taylor, in addition to Issa Sesay and others already facing trial, key actors during the war never appeared before the Court thereby thwarting its mission and giving it a bad public image. Although two other persons, Moinina Fofana and Allieue Kondewa, former leaders of the pro-government Civil Defence Force militia, were found guilty of war crimes, the fact that sentencing was deferred to an unspecified date in the future did nothing to restore confidence in the work of the Court (*The*

Guardian, Lagos, 3/8/07). This situation explains the perception among the informed public in Freetown and other cities across the country and beyond that given the relatively huge sums of money expended in legal and administrative proceedings, the establishment of the Court was not a priority in a country with thousands of war victims who are not receiving government attention. The plight of the amputees and other victims of war is particularly relevant here, thus prompting Yasmine Jusu Sheriff's rhetorical question: 'Is the government comfortable in seeing war victims as beggars?'²⁴²

The uncertainty surrounding the end point and verdict in the trial of Charles Taylor in The Hague as well as the huge sums of money being expended on his legal support are all factors that would not endear the Special Court to the people of Sierra Leone. While it was intended to promote reconciliation among Sierra Leoneans, thus far, the Court seemed to have only succeeded in driving a wedge between government and some perpetrators of war crimes, on the one hand, and certain ethnic groups and victims of the war, on the other. That is certainly not in the short-term, or even in the long-term, interest of a country devastated by civil war and badly in need of reconciliation to heal the wounds of victims, their families and the country at large.

As for the TRC, official statements from highly placed political figures in the country clearly indicate that it was expected to contribute significantly to post-conflict peace building efforts. It is not a hyperbole to say that in some respects, the TRC was anticipated to perform almost magical functions, meaning healing the wounds inflicted on individuals, families, communities and the nation at large during the eleven-year rebel war. Furthermore, the TRC was expected to provide succour to victims of the war and enable the perpetrators not only to purge their minds and heave a sigh of relief, but also to obtain forgiveness for their transgressions, thereby paving way for their reintegration into the society and genuine national reconciliation. Its main goals were consequently two-fold: a) to investigate the causes, nature and extent of gross human rights violations and abuses; and b) to restore the human dignity of victims by providing them and perpetrators with the opportunity of giving accounts of the human rights violations committed during the long civil war.

The Commission conducted a series of public hearings in Freetown and in the provinces, with very interesting presentations by victims and perpetrators. While some Sierra Leoneans are of the view that the activities of the TRC have, to some extent, generated a spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation in the country, others are of the view that it is incapable of promoting genuine reconciliation in the country (Sesay 2007). As noted, there was tension between the two transitional agencies; the TRC, established to unravel the truth about what happened during the war including identifying those who committed atrocities, and the Special Court, established to punish those who bore the greatest responsibility

for gross violations of human rights during the period 1996 to 2000. Consequently, both high ranking officials and lesser perpetrators on both sides in the war were reluctant to appear before the Commission for fear that their testimonies may be used against them by the Special Court. Thus, if one of the main objectives of the TRC was to dig out the truth as an approach to national reconciliation, the Commission was unable to do so.

Besides that and given the appalling economic and social statuses of the victims of war-time impunity, especially those identified as having special needs in the Final Report of the TRC, it is reasonable to conclude that truth-telling as a means of healing past wounds and coping with the future is meaningless without the requisite material empowerment of the victims of impunity during the war. In other words, any reconciliation that is promoted in such a situation is transient, because it does not address victims' immediate and long-term needs in the post-conflict dispensation under President Kabbah. Significantly, this pessimism is shared by the Final Report of the TRC, which noted:

Truth-telling without reparations could be perceived by the victims as an incomplete process in which they revealed their pain and suffering without any mechanism in place to deal with the consequences of that pain or to substantially alter the material circumstances of their lives. In that regard, the Commission concurs with the view expressed by the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission that without adequate reparation and rehabilitation measures, there can be no healing or reconciliation.⁴³

Given government's inability to implement most of the TRC recommendations, the above conclusion has serious implications for lasting peace in the country. Furthermore, even if the peace were to be preserved, it would not address the dire needs of the amputees and other war affected persons, especially the vast majority who reside in the rural areas and who seemed to have been forgotten in the scheme of things in post-war Sierra Leone.

Perhaps more decisive is the perceived and real inability of the Sierra Leonean state to address effectively the plight of war victims with special needs, and the implication of that plight for the socialization processes of victims' children and members of extended families. The pent up anger of the victims and the danger that anger poses to long-term reconciliation came out clearly in the victims' testimonies during the Commission's proceedings. For instance, a female victim had this to say to the Commission during a session in the north of the country:

We the amputees, how are we in this world now? I am not speaking for myself here. The government should not leave our case behind. It is not for us, it is for our children. If my child grows up and asks me who chopped off my hand, I will say these people did it to me. That will bring the war again. If you say peace should come, we the amputees should

bring the peace. I can't be struggling and say that I am living in peace. That is why our case should be pushed forward. If our problem is left behind, [the] war will not end. We the amputees we all have children... we have no hands. We should be assisted. If we are assisted we will have peace of mind. All our children can think for themselves now. They ask us who chopped our hands and feet. We have to make our children reconcile their minds.⁴⁴

To its credit, the Final Report of the Truth Commission was blunt about the precarious nature of the post-hostilities, peace building and reconstruction efforts, if the myriad victims' needs remain unfulfilled.

Some are faced almost continuously with those who have harmed them in their own communities, their presence serving as a constant reminder of the violation suffered. Moving beyond this state is impossible given the economic and social conditions that victims find themselves in and their dependence on handouts. The humiliation of being dependent on the charity of others and often having to beg in order to live re-victimizes victims, leaving lasting scars and wounds that may fester thoughts of bitterness and anger. This may constitute the seeds of future violence. A reparations programme has the potential to restore the dignity of victims whose lives have been most devastated to move beyond the position they are in as a consequence of the war. The restoration of the dignity of victims can help to create the conditions necessary for reconciliation.⁴⁵

Unfortunately, there was also overwhelming perception that Kabbah's government did very little to address the underlying factors that led to the war in the first place. It would appear, then, that in spite of the overwhelming support it received from the international community for its post-war reconstruction programmes and efforts, the government of Tejan Kabbah was doing business as usual. But the danger of this *déjà vu* attitude was brought home dramatically in early May 2004 when some 200 amputees mounted a violent protest in the south-eastern town of Kenema to bring their desperate plight to the attention of the government. According to their spokesperson, three amputees had died the week before the protest due to medical neglect. Much more revealing for its impact on post-war reconciliation was their complaint that government favoured and even valorised ex-combatants, who, according to one amputee, are 'sent to school, given scholarships to study at home and abroad without caring about the victims'.⁴⁶ Another amputee lamented: 'what puzzles me is that the perpetrators are cared for and those of us who are victims are left out. What will happen to us in the future?'⁴⁷ This outpouring of frustration draws attention to one key development in post-war Sierra Leone: the government's preferential treatment of ex-combatants and, by implication, some perpetrators.

The hard fact is that the Sierra Leonean government does not own the post-conflict reconciliation process and agenda. It is largely externally driven. As a result, the concerns, priorities and even the focus of the donor community, including many non-governmental organizations, are not necessarily the same as those of the state and people of Sierra Leone. For instance, the amputees' colony was disbanded without material compensation or the establishment of necessary social and economic infrastructure to address their needs. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the 'reminders' of the war are still very much evident to the visitor as soon as he arrives in the capital, Freetown.

At Mammy Yoko helipad, where helicopters from the international airport drop off passengers coming to Freetown, young Joseph Fofanah — perhaps 13 years old — walks up to one of the cars taking the visitors to their various destinations. Without a word, he holds up his remnants of his arms — amputated above the elbows by combatants during the war — and begs for help. Other amputees do likewise. "I don't know what the TRC or the Special court is. I have nothing to say about him (the person who cut off his arms) but just help me with something to eat" (IRINews.org, April 6, 2004: 1).

Another diplomat in Freetown cynically commented on the TRC's the impact on national reconciliation thus: 'Yes the stories will be told, but people will go back to live with amputees in the same community. How do you guarantee that revenge will not occur?' (IRINews.org, April 6, 2004: 4).

This situation is far from the ideal if long-term peace and stability are to be restored in the country. The stark reality of Sierra Leone's predicament is that there can be no long-term peace and reconciliation if there is no 'distributive justice' in an environment of extreme economic depravity. At the bottom of the government's post-war reconstruction challenges, therefore, is the country's overwhelming reliance on the international community not only for executing, but sometimes even for supervising, the reconstruction programmes. It is a situation complicated by the propensity for donors to default in their pledges to the government at critical phases when the process is already underway. From such a perspective, it is doubtful if truth, in the context of the TRC processes, without material reparations would provide the healing that forms the indispensable foundation of reconciliation in a post-war context like Sierra Leone. For instance, how would a youth whose limbs had been amputated secure his/her daily needs with dignity in a country where majority of even able bodied citizens live below the poverty line? The important question is, will the affected youth, who roam the streets of Freetown and who are idle in the rural areas, and the war affected adults, ever forget the past and move on, when the past is deeply etched on their individual daily experiences and collective memories? The answer, as unpalatable

as it may be, is no, and that answer may have significant bearing on the thrust and longevity of peace and stability in the country.

The undisputable reality is that Sierra Leone cannot effectively embark upon any credible post-war reconstruction initiatives in the absence of local capacity and resources, human and material. Consequently, the speed, content, extent and even the quality of programmes and the pace in executing them very much depend on how far the international community is still ready to go. That cannot however be assured anymore. It is already obvious that local and international goodwill is progressively waning in the light of government's inability to curb the scourge of corruption. Accordingly, there is a perceptible scaling down of donor activity in the country.

Finally, the political commitment to the implementation of the major recommendations of the TRC is also questionable. Apart from the publication of a Government White Paper on the Final TRC Report, very little was done by Kabbah to implement the Commission's recommendations to date. Take for instance, the proposal that government should apologise to the women of Sierra Leone for the unprecedented violence they suffered during the civil war. Until he left office in September 2007, no move had been made by Kabbah's government in that regard. In addition, the issue of reparations for war victims remained a prickly one for that government, and will remain so even for Kabbah's successor, Ernest Bai Koroma, who was sworn in on September 17, 2007 having won a keenly contested election winning 54.6 per cent of the votes in the run-off with Solomon Barewa, former vice-president under Kabbah. In any case, in the absence of political will, there is also a dearth of local capacity to implement the recommendations of the Report. Given the increasing credibility gap in Kabbah's government and the growing uncertainty over the ability of his successor to make a clean break with the past and restore confidence in the post-war reconstruction programme, it is going to be difficult for the country to attract new funds from abroad. These worrying signals of the transitional justice process in the country have led many people, across all strata of society, to question the sustainability of the post-war reconstruction programmes in the country. For instance, a senior official of the Campaign for Good Governance (CGG), who worked in Kambia District on the northern border with Guinea earlier, lamented that:

The peace and reconciliation expected to be achieved is far from getting its required fruits in Kambia district because people most affected by the war living in the villages are not sensitised on what peace and reconciliation is all about. The assignments of sensitising people are given to people who could not even speak the languages understood by the common people – people worse hit by the war, for example, amputees have been completely abandoned... Some of these amputees are forced by hunger to go out begging. Would these people understand peace and reconciliation? (cited in Baker and Roy 2004: 52).

As for the impact of the Special Court on the reconciliation and post-conflict reconstruction processes, it was noted earlier that there was palpable tension between the TRC and the Court which significantly affected the proceedings of the Truth Commission. Indeed, it is hard to see the logic that informed the simultaneous existence of two transition agencies with overlapping mandates and jurisdictions in Sierra Leone. It certainly seems contradictory, for instance, to talk about healing the wounds of the past and promoting reconciliation whilst at the same time talking about justice and retribution. As Baker and May (2004: 5) aptly observed, 'the reality is that both these institutions have more to do with meeting the donor agenda than the calls from the public.' Not surprisingly, with the exception of the recent arrest and detention of Taylor, as earlier argued, key actors, including Sankoh, Bockarie and Koroma, did not appear before the Court, thereby reinforcing the point that its major objective of bringing to book key actors has not been realised. However, considering the huge sums of money expended on its proceedings and infrastructure, the inevitable question is whether the Court was really a priority post-war intervention in a country where thousands of war victims were mired in poverty and unimaginable suffering.

The Youth Problem in Post-war Reconstruction

Another very important area in Sierra Leone's post-war reconstruction activities under the leadership of President Kabbah was the future of the teeming mass of unemployed and unemployable youth in the country. The 2003 Pilot Population Survey indicated that people between the ages 15 to 35 comprise 33.3 per cent the population of Sierra Leone, of which 14.6 per cent are male and 18.7 per cent are female. Such a high proportion of youth in the country's population makes it extremely important for government to address their needs since it was from this very group of Sierra Leoneans that most former combatants were recruited. Many of the country's youth were actually disenchanted with the poor administration of justice in the country by local and national authorities, as well as with the rampant corruption and greed among political office holders and their cronies. Expectedly, they looked forward to concrete post-conflict youth programmes that would reverse their plights and fortunes.

To be sure, Kabbah's government did put in place a series of measures to address the nagging youth problem. One of the most innovative was the establishment of a Youth and Sports Ministry headed by a minister with considerable experience in youth work in the country. To tackle the multi-faceted problems facing the youth in the country, government also put in place a National Youth Policy/National Youth Development Programme as well as a National Commission on War Affected Children, a National Drug Control Strategy and a National HIV/AIDS Policy and Secretariat. While these programmes look attractive on paper, in reality, they are mere window dressing palliatives. For example, it is

not sufficient merely to establish a Ministry of Youth and Sports, if the capacity and the political commitment to address the daily challenges that face the youth are absent. It is instructive from such a standpoint that the Ministry's National Youth Policy, launched in July 2003, has been severely criticised by the National Youth Coalition and other youth organisations in the country, and especially in the capital, on the grounds that there were few consultations with them in its design, and for patently ignoring priorities like information technology access, training and psychological help (Field Interview, 2003).

Furthermore, in spite of the government's efforts to provide educational and training opportunities for young people, there are still a good number of youth without access to such facilities in many parts of the country, even within the greater Freetown municipal area. This situation results in part from the official, mandatory school fees as well as miscellaneous charges imposed by school authorities, which parents and guardians are unable to pay due to the excruciating economic situation in the country. Given the poor state of the economy and widespread unemployment then, many parents and guardians have been constrained to withdraw their children and wards from school. More worrying, perhaps, is the fact that the employment prospects for the large pool of young people in post-conflict Sierra Leone are bleak. Even the DDR programme that attempted to provide some training opportunities for young ex-combatants encountered problems, especially with regard to the length of the training received and its relevance in addressing the immediate and long-term needs of the youth. For instance, those who were made to do carpentry completed their training only to discover that the poor state of the economy did not encourage people to buy furniture in the face of more competing needs like food and health.

The DDR also presented a problem with regard to the girl child soldier and those who were forced to act as sex slaves or so-called emergency wives. Since many female ex-combatants could not come out for fear of stigmatisation they could not claim the Le300, 000 benefit that was given to those who officially registered, and surrendered their weapons. Again, no provision was made to cater for those who became mothers while in the bush, or those who were either pregnant or infected with the HIV/AIDS virus. Finally, families and communities were not empowered economically to cope with the challenges of integrating ex-combatants or child mothers (BBC African Perspective, 3/7/07). The inability of families and communities to reintegrate most of the young people compelled many youth to travel to Cote d'Ivoire to offer their services as combatants on all sides in the conflict in that country, with all the negative implications for long-term peace and stability not only in that country, but also in Sierra Leone itself and Mano River Zone in general. To compound the situation, the needs of the youth in rural areas were totally neglected, especially in terms of access to land. Richards (1994, 1996) eloquently drew attention to the predicament of rural

youth in a comprehensive assessment of social capital in the country, and cautioned that unless there is the political will at the national and chiefdom levels to tackle headlong fundamental inequities, the causes of urban migration and youth disgruntlement would not be sustainably addressed.

The Anti-corruption Campaign and Post-war Reconstruction

One of the yardsticks for measuring the success or failure of Kabbah's government has been the fight against corruption, perceived as one of the most important causes of the civil war and eventual collapse of the Sierra Leonean state. As expected, a core issue in his good governance programme was the fight against corruption in both the public and private sectors in the country. In his second inaugural address to Parliament in July 2004, Kabbah identified corruption as a national security issue and stated that he would maintain a zero tolerance of the menace (PRSP 2005: 79). Through international prompting, government established the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) in 2000 with the expressed mandate of strengthening effective oversight of the conduct of public officials and the use of public resources. The ACC was to investigate corruption and also engage in public education campaigns with the ultimate goal of curbing corruption and its deleterious effects on all spheres of public endeavour in the country. It was also believed that such a development would restore confidence in government nationwide and within the donor community.

However, the ACC has not been able to score significant success in its drive against corruption among public office holders and those with very close ties to power in the country. Indeed, procedurally, one of the ACC's shortcomings is that its enforcement powers are tentative. Besides that, the international community seems to have turned its back on the anti-corruption campaign, since there is virtually no external monitoring and oversight of this agency. This situation has allowed government business to be conducted in much the same old ways, if not worse. Sahr Kpundeh, an informed observer of the political scene in the country, stated:

...the capacity to punish and enforce Sierra Leone's corruption laws is abysmally poor. Like his predecessor, the SLPP administration under Tejan Kabbah has selectively enforced the law against corruption, and in most instances, as in the case of his former minister of agriculture...guilty culprits are slapped on the wrist and are ordered to refund any diverted money (2004: 96).

It was no surprise, therefore, that even the anti-corruption agencies that Kabbah's government was prodded to set up by the international community lacked teeth, as they had been emasculated by the presidency. For example, the findings of the ACC were subject to political vetting by the attorney general and minister of justice. Using wide discretionary powers, however, the justice minister can decide if an accused person should be prosecuted in a court of law or whether a matter should be allowed to rest. Kpundeh captured this phenomenon graphically this way:

The Attorney General will in turn examine the report — of the anti-corruption commission — and decide whether there are sufficient grounds to prosecute the public official concerned. In other words, the [Anti-Corruption] Act clearly states that no prosecution shall be instituted without the written consent of the Attorney General and Minister of Justice... then it is only fair to conclude that the Anti-corruption Commission has been established to appease the donors (2004: 97).

More troubling was the tendency for the president to interfere capriciously with the judicial process and the work of the Anti-Corruption Commission at critical junctures. A particularly disturbing example of this phenomenon was Kabbah's pardon of a former minister who had been found guilty of selling Sierra Leonean passports to foreign nationals. Due to presidential intervention, the minister was only requested to pay back the equivalent of the money he received for the passports to the state, instead of going to jail. Kabbah's explanation was insipid, stating that the minister is 'one of the brains in the country and it does not make sense for him to languish in jail' (2004: 97). A second disquieting example is the government's handling of the corruption case against the former Minister of Transport and Communication, Momoh Pujeh, who was found guilty of unlawful possession of precious minerals, including 638.81 carats of diamonds with an estimated value of 73,000,000 Leones about US\$26,000, and was sentenced to two years imprisonment. Surprisingly, however, the accused successfully appealed the sentence by arguing that he had acted as the authorised agent of a license holder who had transferred to him the rights, in spite of the fact that each artisan/small scale mining license clearly states that the document is not transferable (International Crisis Group 2004: 8). Delivered on Christmas Eve of 2003, the judgment raised questions of political interference with the judicial process in the country, an issue that continues to worry national and internal observers. Little wonder, then, that Sierra Leone is still ranked as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. A Corruption Prevention Survey, carried out in 2000 by Joe Lappia and Emmanuel Gaima, revealed that 95.6 per cent of respondents thought corruption is rampant and widespread in the country, while 94 per cent believed that corruption is rampant in most institutions. The results of this study are corroborated by the 2002 Governance and Corruption Study, financed by DFID and the World Bank (International Crisis Group 2004: 53). Not surprisingly, the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (limitedly based on perceptions of the degree of corruption as seen by business people and country analysts) ranked Sierra Leone 118th out of 146, 129th out of 156, and 150th out of 179 countries, respectively, in 2004, 2005 and 2007. These ratings simply confirmed what most informed observers recognized several years ago: the Kabbah administration's war on corruption was ineffective and was indeed 'all-for show'.

Against this background, the general feeling is 'one of betrayal, hatred, loss of confidence and regret that government has failed the people... government has not lived up to public expectations' (Field Interview, Freetown, 2003). To remedy this situation, government appointed a full-time expatriate judge and prosecutor to develop a comprehensive National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS) to combat corruption by focusing on four main areas: causes of corruption; attitude to corruption; measures needed to reduce the opportunities for corruption and corrupt aggrandizement; and, assessment of the current state of corruption and options to break with the past (ZIF/KAPPTC 2005: 53). What is not certain, however, is the likely disposition of a post-Kabbah government in Sierra Leone to faithfully prosecute the war on corruption and rekindle local and international confidence in the government and the country. Already, the newly elected President, Bai Koroma, again pledged a zero tolerance on corruption during his inauguration in mid-September 2007.

Generally, still, within the ranks of the opposition movement, the widely held consensus is that the previous government was full of much talk, deceit, lies, falsity and above all corruption. It was also one full of mouthwatering pledges but little or no intentions to redeem them (Field Interview, Freetown, 2003). A broadly held view is that the government's brilliant blueprints for post-war reconstruction in the country remained so only on paper. The opposition believed that Kabbah's government had a clear idea of what should be done to bring about effective post-conflict reconstruction in the country, but lacked the political will and the enabling human and fiscal resources to do so. Another popular view is that donors' funds have been frittered away by government officials and their cronies through embezzlement and mismanagement. One western diplomat described Kabbah's government as a huge 'sieve' through which donors' funds passed and 'simply disappeared at the bottom (Field Interview, Freetown, 2003). In the same vein, government was accused of lacking a strong commitment to improving the welfare of the citizens as well as the sincerity to champion the cause, especially of the ordinary people, who carried the major brunt of the long civil war. According to an assistant superintendent of police in Freetown:

The government would have been able because they have the resources, but they misuse them. They also have expertise, but their concern is more on revenge, bullying and propaganda. They also promise what they cannot deliver (Ibid).

Another important dimension into government's dilemma was provided by the programme officer of ACTIONAID in Freetown, when he said, 'I am not sure the government has the capacity for effective post-war reconstruction... funds may be available but effective deployment towards reconstruction is where the problem lies' (Field Interview, Freetown, 2003). There is a shared opinion by government officials, civil society and the donor community, that the favourable

perception of the government abroad, at least initially, had a positive influence on post-war reconstruction in Sierra Leone, compared with what obtained in neighbouring Liberia under Taylor. The main reason for the difference is that the government of Kabbah in Sierra Leone was believed to have been democratically elected; hence, donors were of the view that they had a moral as well as ideological obligation to assist its post-war reconstruction drive. In contrast, the presidential and parliamentary elections in Liberia were thought to be fraught with problems. Indeed, the overwhelming perception is that people voted for Taylor out of fear that he would return to the bush and continue the war if not elected president. Although it was acknowledged that a good number of those in Kabbah's post-war government, including the president himself, are highly qualified and experienced technocrats, serious doubts were nonetheless expressed during the fieldwork (reported in details in the next chapter) about whether the president and his men were truly democrats and had the political determination to do things differently from what people were used to, under the dictatorial, wasteful and discredited regime of Stevens' APC. One respondent said succinctly:

The government is democratically elected in a popular vote, hence the ease with which it is able to attract external funding and support. It also has officials who can attract major international donors, but the intention is to get rich overnight save for a few loyal ones (Field Interview, Freetown, 2003).

It remains to be seen how quickly and further the post-Kabbah government in Freetown after the August 11, 2007 presidential and general elections will go to restore the sagging confidence of the international community in order to attract enough funds to continue with the arduous post-war reconstruction programmes and activities. What is not in doubt is that Kabbah, after almost eleven years in power, lost much of the trust and confidence of his compatriots, and, most importantly, the international community and donor agencies were, as expected, frustrated by the inability of his government to effectively curb widespread corruption in the country and establish a transparent and accountable administration. One of the most important lessons from Sierra Leone's experience thus far, then, is that post-war regimes must be perceived nationally and internationally as democratic, if they are to receive the indispensable moral, financial and material support that are vital in implementing post-conflict reconstruction programmes. The Sierra Leone experience has also convincingly proven that external perceptions of the post-war regime in a poor country may be the most decisive factor in shaping the attitude and reaction of the international community, especially donors, to requests for assistance. Finally, the single and most important lesson learnt from the experiences of Sierra Leone is that conflicts and wars of any nature, are costly, and post-war reconstruction is a highly uncertain road full of booby traps. Securing lasting peace after protracted hostilities and violence imposes not just a heavy burden on the whole society, but it also takes a painfully long time to achieve.

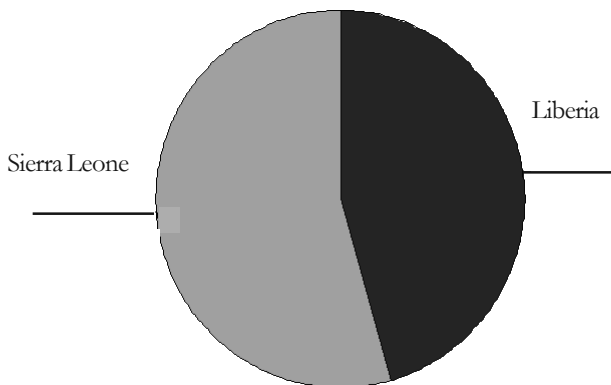
5

Post-war Regimes and Reconstruction: Analysis of Empirical Data from Liberia and Sierra Leone

Distribution of Respondents by Location

A total of 220 respondents participated in the survey, including 100 from Liberia, or 44.5 per cent of the total, and 120, or 54.5 per cent, from Sierra Leone (see Figure 1). The questionnaire survey was complemented by in-depth interviews with relevant stakeholders within government, the private sector and civil society in the two countries. The respondents were deliberately selected in order to accommodate mainly the educated segments of the population who could articulate their views on the subject matter with relative ease

Figure 1: Distribution of Respondents by Location

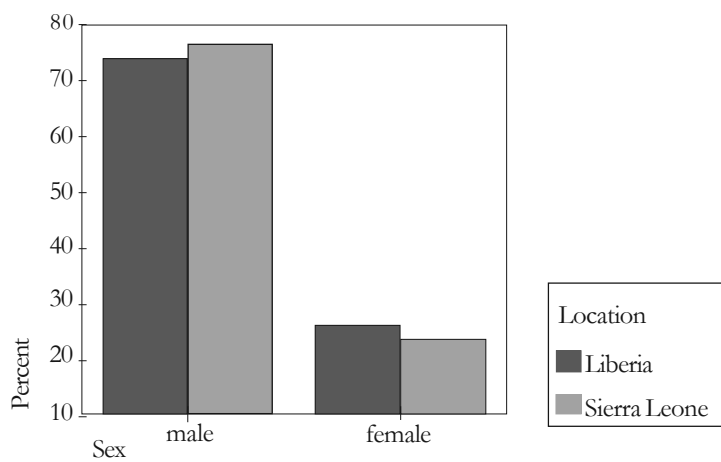


Socio-economic Characteristics of Respondents

The socio-economic characteristics of the sample survey are presented below and emphasize variables such as age, sex and marital status, level of education, occupation, region and religion. The survey sample was made up of 74 per cent male and

26 per cent female for Liberia, and 77 per cent male and 23 per cent female for Sierra Leone (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Distribution of Respondents by Sex



With regard to the age distribution, the minimum age of respondents was 22 years while the maximum age was 56 years. Majority of the respondents are between the ages of 31 and 50, which is the most productive, socio-politically aware and mature population in any country. The mean ages for respondents in Liberia and Sierra Leone are 37.2 years and 35.9 years respectively (see Table 1).

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Age

Categories	Liberia		Sierra Leone		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
30 years and below	15	15	50	41.7	65	29.5
31 – 50 years	81	81	60	50.0	141	64.1
Above 50 years	4	4	10	8.3	14	6.4
Total	100	100	120	100	220	100

The distribution of respondents according to marital status was 50 per cent each for singles and married people in Sierra Leone, while in Liberia, 68 per cent of respondents were single, 23 per cent married and 9 per cent were divorced. With reference to the distribution of respondents by levels of education attained, over 83 per cent of those in Liberia, and 60 per cent of those in Sierra Leone, had

university education. At the secondary school level, about 17 per cent and 34 per cent of respondents in the two countries, respectively, had secondary education, while only 3 per cent had no education and/or did not attend other higher institutions among the respondents in Sierra Leone. Finally, with regard to the religious affiliation of respondents, there were more Christians than Muslims surveyed in both countries (see Figure 5). Specifically, over 86 per cent and 59 per cent of the respondents in Liberia and Sierra Leone were Christian, while 14 per cent and 41 per cent, respectively, were Muslim.

Several important caveats should be noted in engaging with the socio-demographic data presented above. First, we randomly and purposively selected our respondents to cover a broad spectrum of different groups and interests within the two countries. Secondly, due to logistical constraints, selection of respondents was limited to people domicile in the capitals of the two countries, that is, Monrovia and Freetown. While there is a possibility that they may not entirely reflect the overall perception of the general publics in the two countries, selecting them in a manner that is conscious of the diversity of the country, was expedient. It would be recalled that during the civil wars in the two countries, their capital cities provided safe havens for a large number of people fleeing the insecurity of the rural countryside. Even now that the civil wars have effectively ended, many of those who forcibly relocated to the two capitals are reluctant to go back home; not because they are satisfied with the living conditions in those cities, but because there is very little, if anything, to return to, in terms of socio-economic opportunities and infrastructure, in the rural areas. At the moment, the writ of government is far less obvious in the rural areas, even though few qualitative changes have taken place in the major towns and cities. Thus, it is plausible to argue that even if perceptions of the residents of the capital cities are good or bad, they may differ only slightly from what would have been obtained in the rural areas where post-war reconstruction efforts and programmes are hardly felt by the populace. Finally, what we have presented is merely a representative selection of public perceptions of some of the issues that concerned or affected post-war reconstruction. Even though the issues were generated from close interactions with, and inputs from the two countries, they are by no means all inclusive. In the end, of course, they should be taken only as representative perceptions that may not completely represent reality, but which nevertheless provide a useful barometer for gauging general public nuances about post-war situations in the two countries. The divergence of the data presented, and the implications they portend, certainly point to a rich opportunity for further research in the near future.

Major Causes of the Civil Wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone

This section ranks the major causes of the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone from the perspective of the respondents. They were asked to rank various pre-selected factors: weak family structure, bad governance, unemployment, poverty,

exclusion from the socio-political arena, neglect of the youth, struggle for natural resources, personalities, especially the leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia, Charles Taylor, and the leader of the Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone, Foday Sankoh (see Table 2 below). Of the major causes, respondents in both countries indicated that 'bad governance' was the most important precipitating factor for civil war, as indicated by 65 per cent of the total respondents. When the overall average was disaggregated, 83.3 per cent of respondents in Liberia claimed that bad governance was responsible for the descent into civil war, while 52.5 per cent of respondents in Sierra Leone made a similar claim regarding their country.

Next to bad governance as the major cause of the civil war in both countries, weak family structure was ranked second with 20 per cent among respondents in Liberia, while political exclusion ranked second with 26 per cent in the case of Sierra Leone. The role of *dramatis personae* in the eruption and intensification of the two civil wars came out boldly when 12.9 per cent of respondents in Liberia placed Taylor third in the ranking of the causes of war in his country, and to a large extent, the war in neighboring Sierra Leone. The role of this principal actor was complemented by the nature of political exclusion that preceded the violent civil war in Liberia. Unemployment was identified as a strong factor that instigated the Liberian civil war, while it featured far less among respondents in Sierra Leone. Other factors, including the neglect of youth, poverty and struggle for natural resources, played only secondary roles in the outbreak of the two civil wars, quite contrary to conventional literature.

It is likely, however, that as the civil wars intensified, some of the secondary factors may have assumed renewed importance. For instance, evident neglect of youth during the pre-war years may have been responsible for the large number who opted to participate actively as combatants on the sides of the different rebel groups. For many of the children and young adults who decided to join the different rebel factions, their participation seemed to have been prompted by the belief that it was the best survival strategy in the prevailing circumstances of that time. The same point could be made in respect of poverty and struggles by various warring factions to gain access to lucrative natural resources, especially timber, gold and diamonds. As more and more people joined the warring factions out of socio-economic desperation, the 'fighting corporations' set up by the different warring groups began to depend increasingly on plundering the vast mineral wealth located in the countryside to prosecute their wars.

Table 2: Major Causes of the Civil Wars

Categories	Liberia		Sierra Leone		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Weak Family Structure	20	20	4	3.3	24	10.9
Bad Governance	53	52.5	100	83.3	153	65.5
Unemployment	20	19.8	4	3.3	24	10.9
Political Exclusion	12	11.9	32	26.7	44	20.0
Role of Personalities	13	12.9	4	3.3	17	7.7
Poverty	1	1.0	4	3.3	5	2.3
Struggle for natural Resources	1	1.0	4	3.3	5	2.3
Neglect of Youth	1	1.0	8	6.7	9	4.1

Perceptions of the Peace Processes and the Effects of Post-war Reconstruction in Liberia and Sierra Leone

Although both countries experienced long years of bloody civil wars, the peace processes and post-war reconstruction efforts in Liberia and Sierra Leone differed considerably. This is corroborated by those interviewed with regard to the peace processes, and their understanding of how the nature and character of post-war regimes affected the trajectory and outcomes of post-war peace-building and reconstruction efforts in the two countries. With regard to the peace processes, over half of the respondents in the two countries claimed that those processes in their country were ‘excellent’ (10 per cent), ‘very appropriate’ (33.2 per cent), and ‘just appropriate’ (32.7 per cent). When comparing the two countries, however, the number of respondents (15 per cent) in Sierra Leone, who claimed to be very satisfied by reporting ‘excellent’, far exceeded the number of respondents (4 per cent) in Liberia. It is strange that 45 per cent of respondents in Liberia indicated that the peace process is ‘very appropriate’, compared to only 23.3 per cent in Sierra Leone. Conversely, 12 per cent compared to 50 per cent of respondents in Liberia and Sierra Leone, respectively, believed that the peace process was ‘just appropriate’ (see Table 3).

In Liberia, 15 per cent of respondents said the peace process was ‘inappropriate’, while only 3.33 per cent indicated this in Sierra Leone. 12 per cent of respondents in Liberia stated that the peace process in Liberia was problematic, while a mere 5 per cent alluded to the same point in Sierra Leone. Finally, 12 per cent of respondents in Liberia had ‘no idea’ (could not be bothered) about the

peace process in their country, but only 3.33 per cent made a similar claim in Sierra Leone. Overall, these variations imply, in comparative terms, that a much larger number of people were satisfied with the course and outcomes of the peace process in Sierra Leone than those in Liberia, particularly under former president Charles Taylor.

Table 3: Respondents' Perceptions of the Peace Processes

Categories	Liberia		Sierra Leone		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Excellent	4	4.0	18	15.0	22	10.0
Very Appropriate	45	45.0	28	23.3	73	33.2
Just Appropriate	12	12.0	60	50.0	72	32.7
Inappropriate	15	15.0	4	3.33	5	2.3
Problematic	12	12.0	6	5.0	32	14.5
No Idea	12	12.0	4	3.33	16	7.3
Total	100	100	120	100	220	100

Such a high expectation was also evident among the citizens as shown by their overwhelming enthusiasm that the peace process was desirable, given the harsh lessons of the long years of hostility. According to respondents, the 1999 Lome Peace Accord was admirable because it marked a significant turning point in the history of the civil war, and in particular, for putting an end to the heinous crimes committed against innocent civilians and the massive destruction of private property and social infrastructure by all sides (Alao and Ero 2001: 117-134). As one respondent rightly noted, the peace process 'was timely' not only because it 'reversed an ugly situation', but also because 'it came at a time when so many people knew the importance of peace' (Field Interview, Monrovia and Freetown, 2003). The success of the 1996 elections, in contrast to the continuation of hostilities in neighbouring Liberia, significantly helped to re-establish the confidence of the international community and donor agencies in the country.

Nonetheless, an overwhelming majority of respondents believed that the peace process did not address or resolve all the problems that precipitated the civil wars in the first place. They believed that the only issue that was addressed with some seriousness was that of political exclusion, by putting in place a government that pledged to accommodate all political factions in the country. But as it has turned out, and with the benefit of hindsight, the priority given to an all-inclusive post-war government faltered as leaders of the rebel factions, particularly Foday Sankoh, were less than sincere in their commitment to peace. Thus, Sankoh was soon to scuttle the peace process, even though he had been given the

lucrative and senior portfolio of Minister of Lands and Mines. Not surprisingly, majority of respondents identified several other thorny issues such as poverty, youth unemployment and restiveness, social injustice, and corruption that needed to be tackled before post-war peace and stability, and reconstruction, could be guaranteed. Some of these issues are highlighted in Table 4.

Table 4: Major Shortcomings of the Peace Processes

Shortcomings	Go	OPCS	FIDH
The process does not cater for the victims of the war but perpetrators	+	++	-
No adequate funding for the post-war programmes	++	--	
No provision for the youth	+	+	-
The government was forced to concede too much to the rebels	++	—	
No proper reintegration of ex-combatants	+	++	+
There is still widespread political marginalization	+	+	+
Lack of sincerity and commitment on the part of the major players	+	++	+
There is problem of shelter	-	+	+
The peace process failed to address the social and economic factors that caused the civil war	-	+	+
There is problem of corruption	-	+	++

Key: *Go* - Government Officials
OPCS - Opinion Leaders and Civil Society groups
FIDH - Officials of Foreign Missions, International Institutions, Donor and Humanitarian Agencies
++ Where the opinions were expressed by most of the respondents.
+ Where the opinions were expressed by few of the respondents.
- Where the opinions were not expressed at all.

Broadly, therefore, perceptions of the peace processes are related to how the nature and character of post-war regimes impacted on the outcomes of post-war reconstruction efforts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. There is a convergence of

opinion by majority of the respondents in the two countries that the nature and character of post-war regimes 'strongly affected the process' (64.5 per cent), 'affected the process' (18.6 per cent), and 'fairly affected the process' (8.2 per cent). When examined separately, the trends are strikingly similar for the two countries. Even then, what stood out clearly is that 15 per cent of respondents in Liberia claimed that the nature and character of post-war regimes had 'no effect at all' on post-war reconstruction, compared to only 3.3 per cent in Sierra Leone as contained in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Perceived Effects of Post-war Regimes on Reconstruction in Liberia and Sierra Leone

Categories	Liberia		Sierra Leone		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Strongly affected the process	66	66	76	63.3	142	64.5
Affected the process	17	17	24	20	41	18.6
Fairly affected the process	2	2.0	16	13.3	18	8.2
No effect at all	15	15	4	3.3	19	8.6
Total	100	100	120	100	220	100

When asked to provide a general assessment of government's post-war reconstruction efforts, majority of the respondents underscored the fact that the processes were overwhelmingly driven by what they called internal and external exegesis, factors and forces. While much of the planning is done internally between government and donor governments/agencies, it is estimated that over 75 per cent of funding came from external sources. Apart from that, the donors or the international community advised government on socio-economic matters and priorities and, by implication, significantly influenced the directions and contents of post-war socio-political developments in the country. Yet, the post-war reconstruction programme in Sierra Leone was much slower than expected and, at times, yielded the exact opposite of the desired results. Nonetheless, some of those interviewed were convinced that if the reconstruction programmes were to be more carefully and transparently handled, they have the potential to heal the deep scars of the bitter civil war and enable the people to put their painful war-time experiences behind them much faster. That way, national reconciliation would also have been promoted at a much quicker pace in the country. Furthermore, while some physical rehabilitation was taking place, albeit slowly, as demonstrated by the refurbishment of schools, hospitals and government buildings, the psy-

chosocial components of the reconstruction process were yet to gain momentum across the country.

It is also important to note that although majority of the respondents in Sierra Leone believed that the post-war government is ‘very strong’ (43 per cent) and ‘fairly strong’ (19 per cent) to be able to address reconstruction challenges, another significant number, 38 per cent, insisted that the government was weak and might not be able to effectively manage the challenges and problems arising from reconstruction processes. On the other hand, while only 6.7 per cent of respondents in Liberia stated that the post-war government is ‘very strong’ to be able to address pressing reconstruction challenges, an overwhelming majority, 70 per cent, expressed the opinion that government is only ‘fairly strong’ to conclude the tasks, while another 23.3 per cent believed that the government is patently weak (see Table 6). There is a higher sense of public disenchantment with the capacity of the government in Liberia to meet post-war reconstruction challenges compared to that in Sierra Leone.

Table 6: Capacity of the Governments of Liberia and Sierra Leone to Address Post-war Reconstruction Challenges

Categories	Liberia		Sierra Leone		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very Strong	8	6.7	43	43	51	23.2
Fairly Strong	84	70.0	19	19	103	46.8
Weak	28	23.3	38	38	66	30.0
Total	120	100	100	100	220	100

The next question is related to the respondent’s assessment of the actual post-war reconstruction efforts and programmes in the two countries. On this question, only 0.9 per cent of respondents in the two countries together mentioned that the process and outcomes of post-war reconstruction were ‘extremely successful’, while those who claimed ‘not successful’ (20 per cent) and ‘no idea’ (4.5 per cent) are much higher. From the data presented in Table 7, it is obvious that opinion is divided within Liberia on the success or failure of post-war reconstruction initiatives. This is clearly shown by the per centage of those who claimed the initiative was ‘very successful’ (26 per cent), ‘successful’ (30 per cent), and ‘not successful’ (40 per cent). In the case of Sierra Leone, on the other hand, only 6.7 per cent of the respondents claimed that the process was ‘very successful’ while 83.3 per cent reported that the process was ‘successful’. Only a very small number (3.3 per cent) in Sierra Leone, compared with 40 per cent respondents in Liberia, recorded ‘not successful’.

Table 7: Outcomes of Post-war Reconstruction Efforts

Categories	Liberia		Sierra Leone		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Extremely Successful	2	2.0	-	-	2	0.9
Very Successful	26	26.0	8	6.7	34	15.5
Successful	30	30.0	100	83.3	130	59.1
Not Successful	40	40.0	4	3.3	44	20.0
No Idea	2	2.0	8	6.7	10	4.5
Total	100	100	120	100	220	100

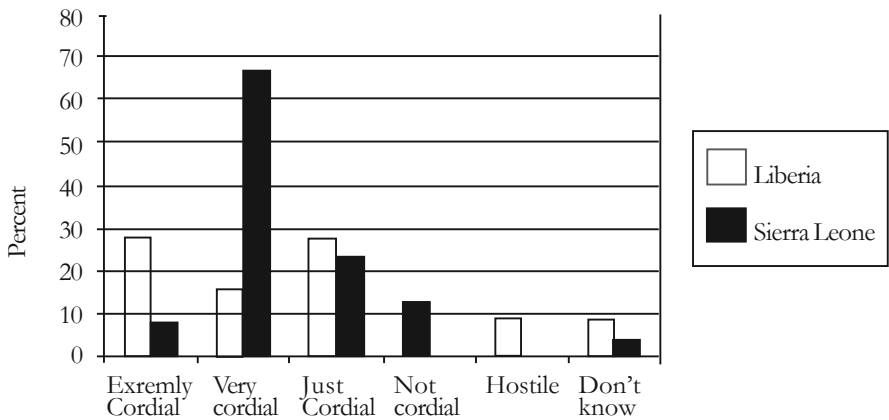
Post-war Regimes, the International Community and Donor Agencies in Liberia and Sierra Leone

For many weak and developing countries coming out of prolonged internal crises and civil wars, vital rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes can best be sponsored and sustained, for a reasonable period of time, with active funding and logistical support from the international community, including private or governmental international donor agencies. In Liberia, 28 per cent of the respondents claimed that there was an 'extremely cordial' relationship between the government and the donor agencies, while another 18 per cent claimed that the relationship was 'cordial'. However, about 28 per cent of respondents believed that the relationship between government and donor agencies was 'just cordial'. In Sierra Leone, 66.7 per cent of respondents stated that there was a 'very cordial' relationship between the post-war government and the donor agencies, while 23.3 per cent claimed that the relationship was 'just cordial' (see Figure 3). About 13 per cent of respondents in Liberia believed that the relationship between government and donor agencies was 'not cordial' no such claim was made by respondents in Sierra Leone. Thus, the broad deduction from these figures is that post-war reconstruction initiatives received far more favorable support in Sierra Leone than in Liberia.

Most respondents believed that the international community did well with regard to post-war reconstruction efforts in Sierra Leone. At the start of post-conflict rebuilding efforts, the country benefited tremendously from the massive foreign assistance provided by the World Bank, the Islamic Development Bank, the United Nations, the Commonwealth, the European Union and individual Western countries, especially the US and UK (Gbla 2002: 197-214). According to one respondent, 'the international community has been supportive and consistent

in terms of aid towards the reorganisation of the police and the armed forces that were destroyed during the civil war years’ (Field Interview, Freetown, 2003). Another respondent believed that, ‘the international community played its role effectively despite its inherent pitfalls, especially in terms of transforming their mandates from peace-making to post-war reconstruction’. All the respondents also believed that continuous international benevolence played vital roles in the form, processes and outcomes of Sierra Leone’s post-war reconstruction programmes, claiming that the major reason for the initial strong support was due to the ability of the government of Tejan Kabbah to effectively lobby and win the confidence of major international donors. The respondents also believed that key indicators of the robust external assistance include the large presence of international aid and donor agencies in the country and the huge amount of external financial assistance and foreign aid, estimated at over \$2 billion, that poured into the country. Finally, respondents were of the view that the nature and character of the post-war regime, the global perception that it was democratic and that Tejan Kabbah was a democrat, also significantly conditioned the amount of interest that the country gained from abroad.

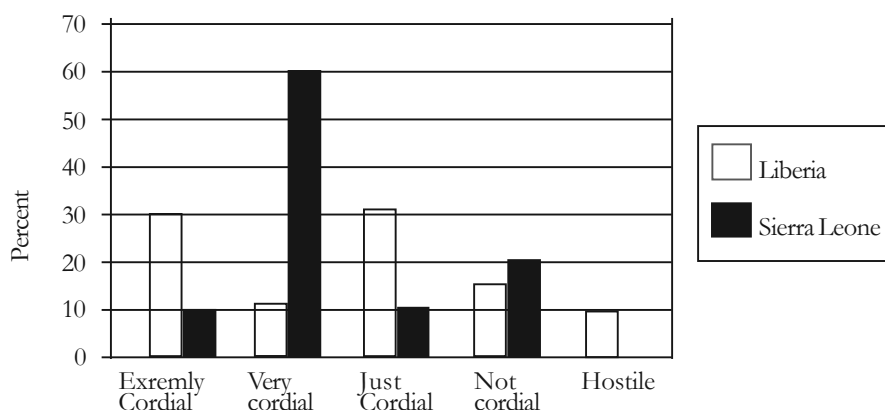
Figure 3: The Relationships between the Two Governments and Donor Agencies



In the same vein, 30 per cent and 31 per cent of respondents in Liberia expressed the view that the relationship between the post-war government and the international community was ‘extremely cordial’ and ‘just cordial’, while 15 per cent each believed that it is ‘not cordial’ or ‘hostile’. However, 60 per cent of respondents from Sierra Leone expressed the view that the relationship between the post-war government in Freetown and the international donor community was ‘very cordial’, while 20 per cent claimed that the relationship was ‘not cordial’ (see Figure 4). It is instructive, once again, to note that slightly over 10 per cent of respond-

ents in Liberia specifically claimed that the relationship between their post-war government and the international community was 'hostile'. No such claim was made by any of the respondents, in the case of Sierra Leone. This is a very crucial point, in view of the relationship among post-war countries/regimes, donor agencies and major governments. In other words, success or failure of post-war regimes to manage effectively pressing post-war challenges is dependent on the amount of goodwill and support they received from donors abroad. This is so because post-war regimes, especially in Africa, typically do not have, or lack, local resources, both human and financial, to put their countries back on track independently.

Figure 4: The Relationship between the Two Governments and the International Community



Obstacles to Post-war Reconstruction in Liberia and Sierra Leone

Table 8 highlights the different obstacles to post-war reconstruction in Liberia and Sierra Leone. According to respondents, corruption and mismanagement are the top obstacles facing the two countries, with 20.9 per cent in Liberia and 28.9 per cent in Sierra Leone. Bad governance and insincerity on the part of the leadership were also identified as major obstacles. However, while bad governance ranked second in Liberia with 18.6 per cent and insincerity third with 14 per cent, the reverse was the case in Sierra Leone, where insincerity was identified as the second most important factor with 19.7 per cent followed by bad governance third with 15.8 per cent. Other factors mentioned in the case of Liberia, in their order of their importance, include lack of human and material resources, ethnicity and favouritism, incomplete disarmament, no infrastructural facilities, high illiteracy level and high unemployment. Other obstacles are the spread of the

war to other countries, unfair labour practices, human rights abuses and brain drain. In Sierra Leone, on the other hand, respondents mentioned lack of human and material resources, ethnicity and favouritism, lack of infrastructural facilities, brain drain, high illiteracy rate and incomplete disarmament.

Table 8: Obstacles to Post-war Reconstruction

Categories	Liberia		Sierra Leone		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Spread of the War to other Countries	10	2.3	-	-	10	1.4
Bad Governance	80	18.6	48	15.8	128	17.4
Corruption and Mismanagement	90	20.9	88	28.9	178	24.3
Incomplete Disarmament	20	4.7	4	1.3	24	3.3
Lack of Human and Material Resources	40	9.3	36	11.8	76	10.4
No Infrastructural Facilities	20	4.7	20	6.6	40	5.4
Insincerity of Leaders	60	14.0	60	19.7	120	16.3
High Illiteracy Level	20	4.7	8	2.6	28	3.8
High Unemployment	20	4.7	-	-	20	2.7
Unfair Labour Practice	10	2.3	-	-	10	1.4
Human Rights Abuse	10	2.3	-	-	10	1.4
Ethnicity and Favouritism	40	9.3	24	7.9	64	8.7
Brain Drain	10	2.3	16	5.2	26	3.5
Total	430	100	304	100	734	100

* Multiple responses were received.

There were variations in the views expressed by the different respondent groups, most especially government officials, opinion leaders and civil society groups and

officials of foreign missions on the obstacles to post war reconstruction in Sierra Leone, as presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Impediments to the Full Implementation of Post-war Reconstruction Programmes

Shortcomings	Go	OPCS	FIDH
Lack of Resources (financial & expertise)	++	++	-
Lack of Proper Monitoring	-	+	-
Misappropriation/Embezzlement of Funds and General Corruption Among Political Office Holders	++	++	-
No Genuine Commitment by the Government	+	++	-
Selfishness and Greediness of Government Officials	+	+	-
Poor Planning and Implementation	-	+	-
Civil Unrest in the Sub-region	+	-	+
Lack of Sufficient and Constant Power Supply	++	-	-
Bad Road Network	+	-	-
The Deteriorating Situation in Liberia	+	-	+
Problem of Re-integrating Ex-combatants	-	-	+

Key: *Go* - Government Officials

OPCS - Opinion Leaders and Civil Society groups

FIDH - Officials of Foreign Missions, International Institutions, Donor and Humanitarian Agencies

++ Where the opinions were expressed by most of the respondents

+ Where the opinions were expressed by few of the respondents

- Where the opinions were not expressed at all.

When asked to identify the positive aspects of post-war reconstruction efforts in their respective countries, 27.3 per cent of the respondents in Liberia stated that there is increased respect for fundamental human rights, while 18.2 per cent mentioned improved security conditions, rebuilding of some social and infrastructural facilities and the disarmament programme. On the other hand, 32.4 per cent of the respondents in Sierra Leone identified provision of social and infrastructural facilities as a positive aspect of the post-war reconstruction, followed by 25.4 per cent who identified improved efforts to mainstream the youth through empowerment programmes. Another 15.5 per cent identified provision of security, while

12.7 per cent drew attention to the far-reaching progress made towards demobilization and disarmament (see Table 10).

Table 10: Perceived Positive Aspects of Post-war Reconstruction Processes

Categories	Liberia		Sierra Leone		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Provision of Security	40	18.2	44	15.5	84	16.7
Provision of Social and Infrastructural Facilities	40	18.2	92	32.4	132	26.2
Disarmament	40	18.2	36	12.7	76	15.1
Fall in the Prices of Rice and Gas	20	9.1	-	-	20	4.0
Respect for Fundamental Human Rights	60	27.3	16	5.6	76	15.1
Strong Civil Society	10	4.5	24	8.5	34	6.7
Youth Empowerment	10	4.5	72	25.4	82	16.3
Total	220	100	284	100	504	100

* Multiple responses were received.

Asked to highlight the unpleasant outcomes and dimensions of post-war reconstruction, however, 24 per cent of the respondents in Liberia mentioned bad governance, 16 per cent identified an unstable school system, and 12 per cent each blamed high cost of living and building materials, lack of investment opportunities, and embezzlement and corruption (see Table 11). In Sierra Leone, the other hand, 28.8 per cent of respondents identified ethnicity and favouritism as negative post-war trends, 25.2 per cent mentioned high cost of living and building materials, 16.2 per cent reported lack of investment, while 10.8 per cent identified lack of genuine commitment to post-war peace building among previous warring factions now in government.

Table 11: Perceived Negative Aspects of Post-War Reconstruction Processes

Categories	Liberia		Sierra Leone		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Spread of the War to Other Countries	10	4.0	-	-	10	2.1
Bad Governance	60	24.0	18	8.1	78	16.5
Lack of Investment	30	12.0	36	16.2	66	14
Embezzlement and Corruption	30	12.0	4	1.8	34	7.2
Unstable School System	40	16.0	4	1.8	44	9.3
High Cost of Living and Building Materials	30	12.0	56	25.2	86	18.2
Lack of Commitment by Warring Parties	10	4.0	24	10.8	34	7.2
Ethnicity and Favouritism	20	8.0	64	28.8	84	17.8
Lack of Resources	10	4.0	8	3.6	18	3.8
Proliferation of Black Market for Dollar	10	4.0	8	3.6	18	3.8
Total	250	100.0	222	100.0	472	100.0

* Multiple responses were received.

The Future of Post-war Reconstruction in Liberia and Sierra Leone

It is clear that what eventually becomes of post-war Liberia and Sierra Leone would largely depend on each country's immediate past experiences; and present situations. In the survey, respondents were invited to take a critical and long-term view of post-war reconstruction efforts, with some of the major limitations to future development in mind (see Table 12). In Liberia, respondents mentioned widespread distrust and animosity (25 per cent), ethnicity and favoritism (22 per cent), corruption (20 per cent), high cost of living (12 per cent) and weak governmental structures and institutions (10 per cent), as factors that could potentially scuttle the peace, stability and development of the country in the near future. In the case of Sierra Leone, respondents mentioned weak educational system (25 per cent), lack of job opportunities especially for youth (20.8 per cent), ethnicity and favoritism (16.7 per cent), widespread distrust and animosity among citizens/ethnic groups (16.7 per cent) and weak governmental structures/institutions, as the most significant stumbling blocks in terms of socio-economic development, peace and stability.

Table 12: The Future of Post-war Reconstruction in Liberia and Sierra Leone

Categories	Liberia		Sierra Leone		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Future Undermined by Corruption	20	20	10	8.3	30	13.6
Weak Government Structure/Institutions	11	11	15	12.5	26	11.8
Weak Educational System	10	10	30	25.0	40	18.2
Cost of Living Must Drop	12	12	-	-	12	5.5
Ethnicity and Favouritism Must Stop	22	22	20	16.7	42	19.1
Widespread Distrust and Animosity Among Citizens/Groups	25	25	20	16.7	45	20.5
Lack of Job Opportunities, Especially for Youth	-	-	25	20.8	25	11.3
Total	100	100.0	120	100.0	220	100.0

The point was made earlier that the Herculean task of post-war reconstruction could not be completed single-handedly by any country; not the least those emerging from prolonged armed conflicts or those that may lack the resources and wherewithal to articulate and successfully pursue their most pressing agenda. At the same time, it is impossible to rely indefinitely on the international donor community, even with the best of intentions and goodwill to pursue and sustain post-war reconstruction. Quite often, there is a limit to which the international community is able and willing to commit resources to post-war rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts over a fairly long period. At the most, the commitment of the international community may last only a few years, instead of the long-term support that is often required to sustainably and effectively tackle the myriad problems facing countries coming out of prolonged civil wars. Such international attention may also be directed towards areas that the post-war government might feel are not pressing and/or important. Thus, a balance must be struck between internal and international commitments to post-war reconstruction, not the least because in the long run, the momentum for recovery depends on the capacity of local agents to mobilize local resources.

In this context, part of the survey sought to gauge general public perceptions of the roles different local and international institutions and agencies were playing

in the post-war reconstruction processes in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The survey included questions related to the public perceptions of the post-war reconstruction effort of the two governments, religious groups, civil society groups, international NGOs, donor agencies, international institutions (especially the UN), and finally, the international community in general. For 64 per cent of respondents in Liberia, the government is very weak in terms of its capacity to successfully implement post-war reconstruction programmes (see Table 13). In fact, only 4 per cent of respondents believed that the performance of the government is 'excellent'. In between the two extremes, 32 per cent of the respondents claimed that the government's role in post-war reconstruction is 'good'. In Sierra Leone, on the other hand, 12.5 per cent of respondents believed the government is doing 'excellent', while 50 per cent believed it is doing 'good'. Although much lower compared to the percentage of respondents in Liberia, those who claimed that the government of Sierra Leone is 'weak' to implement post-war reconstruction represent 37.5 per cent of the total.

Table 13: Perceptions of the Role of the Governments of Liberia and Sierra Leone in Post-war Reconstruction Processes

Categories	Liberia		Sierra Leone		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Excellent	4	4.0	15	12.5	19	8.64
Good	32	32.0	60	50.0	92	41.8
Weak	64	64.0	45	37.5	109	49.5
Total	100	100.0	120	100.0	220	100.0

In war and peace times, also religion and religious groups have played significant social roles in many African countries. Regardless of faith, Christianity or Islam, religious groups usually venture beyond retaining or winning new converts, but also establish schools, hospitals, faith-based healing centers and other community infrastructure. In a number of cases, especially in rural areas, the infrastructure provided by religious groups may turn out to be the only one available. Even in major towns, the facilities and services provided and maintained by religious missionaries have complemented and/or served the people, sometimes far better than those provided by government. In the light of the above situation, it is understandable why and how religious communities have played and continue to play a major role in societies across the continent. In the survey, therefore, public perceptions of the role of religious groups in post-war reconstruction in Liberia and Sierra Leone became a major interest (see Table 14).

In Liberia, 23 per cent of the respondents claimed that religious groups played an ‘excellent’ role in post-war reconstruction, while 43 per cent and 34 per cent respectively, claimed that they played ‘very good’ and ‘weak’ roles. It is instructive that none of the respondents indicated that religious groups had “no involvement” in Liberia, against 3.3 per cent in Sierra Leone. In the later case, 10 per cent believed that religious groups played an ‘excellent role’, whereas a huge 60 per cent claimed they played a ‘very good’ role. Nevertheless, 26.7 per cent of the total respondents in Sierra Leone believed that the role of religious groups in post-war reconstruction is ‘weak’. In comparative terms, then, far more people in Sierra Leone indicated that religious groups played positive and pivotal roles in post-war reconstruction than is the case in Liberia. It is important to bear in mind, however, that a significant number of respondents in both countries who observed that religious groups played ‘weak’ roles.

Table 14: Perceptions of the Role of Religious Groups in Post-war Reconstruction in Liberia and Sierra Leone

Categories	Liberia		Sierra Leone		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Excellent	23	23.0	12	10.0	35	15.9
Very Good	43	43.0	72	60.0	115	52.3
Weak	34	34.0	32	26.7	66	30
No Involvement	-	-	4	3.3	4	1.8
Total	100	100.0	120	100.0	220	100.0

There is an unsettled debate on whether one can speak of a ‘civil’ post-war society given the backdrop of the traumatic experiences of civil war in Liberia and Sierra Leone. (Ukeje 2004). Nevertheless, there is some general consensus that civil societies, broadly defined as forms of civil-based associational life outside of the direct influence and control of the government, can indeed play a pivotal and responsible role in defining not just the contours of the post-war developmental agenda, “... , but also helping to nurture them to fruition. The civil society, for instance, determine the extent to which post-war peace and reconstruction initiatives are adopted as ‘home grown’, acceptable to the people, and sustainable over time. They are also important since external support cannot be guaranteed over a fairly long period of time for the affected countries to fully recuperate. An important hypothetical consideration, therefore, is that *where the civil society is capable and willing to play major social roles, the rhythm of post-war reconstruction is faster and much more qualitative than in countries where no such capability and willingness exist.*

From Table 15, only 2 per cent and 4 per cent of respondents in Liberia and Sierra Leone believed that the civil society is playing an ‘excellent’ role in post-war reconstruction. Those respondents, who claimed that the civil society is playing ‘very good’ roles in both countries, are 58 per cent in Liberia and 73.3 per cent in Sierra Leone, while 40 per cent and 20 per cent, respectively, stated that their civil societies are weak. No one, in the case of Liberia, indicated that the civil society has ‘no involvement’, against 6.6 per cent in Sierra Leone. Altogether, only 2.7 per cent of the total respondents in the two countries indicated that the civil society is playing an ‘excellent’ role, 64 per cent indicated ‘very good’, 27.3 per cent indicated ‘weak’, and only 3.6 per cent stated ‘no involvement’.

Table 15: Perceptions of the Role of Civil Society in Post-war Reconstruction in Liberia and Sierra Leone

Categories	Liberia		Sierra Leone		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Excellent	2	2.0	4	3.3	6	2.7
Very Good	58	58.0	88	73.3	146	66.4
Weak	40	40.0	20	16.7	60	27.3
No Involvement	-	-	8	6.6	8	3.6
Total	100	100.0	120	100.0	220	100.0

The role of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and donor agencies in post-war reconstruction—particularly in weak developing countries that are coming out of prolonged civil wars—is whether or not they are involved on a scale and duration suitable for the affected countries. It should be recalled that one of the long-standing criticisms against INGOs and donor agencies is that they tend to be more involved during or immediately after civil wars when there are the so-called “complex humanitarian emergencies”. After that period, however, they either tend to scale down their operations drastically or terminate them completely. While the activities of INGOs and the donor community in the short-term—that is, during the period immediately after the cessation of civil war hostilities—are necessary and significant input into long-term recovery, the question of sustainability arises when such external support networks are scaled down or stopped. Details of public perceptions of the roles of INGOs and donor agencies in post-war Liberia and Sierra Leone are presented in Table 16. Twenty-six per cent of respondents in Liberia and 22.5 per cent of those in Sierra Leone believed that INGOs and donor agencies have played ‘excellent’ roles. In contrast, 43 per cent of respondents in Liberia and 7.5 per cent in Sierra Leone claimed that the role of INGOs and donor agencies is

‘weak’. In between the two extremes are those who indicated that INGOs and donor agencies are playing ‘very good’ roles, including 31 per cent in Liberia and 70 per cent in Sierra Leone. This shows that public perceptions of the roles of INGOs and donor agencies are far more favorable in Sierra Leone than in Liberia (Table 16).

Table 16: Perceptions of the Roles of International NGOs and Donor Agencies in Post-war Reconstruction in Liberia and Sierra Leone

Categories	Liberia		Sierra Leone		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Excellent	26	26.0	27	22.5	53	24.1
Very Good	31	31.0	84	70.0	115	52.3
Weak	43	43.0	9	7.5	52	23.6
Total	100	100.0	120	100.0	220	100.0

One of the most prominent international organizations in the contemporary world is the United Nations. From the periods when it was founded immediately after the Second World War to date, the membership of the UN, its agenda and programmes have broadened significantly to include the promotion of global peace and security. This important task involves not just ensuring that wars do not break out, but also that in the event of such wars, concerted efforts are made to maintain peace and post-war recovery in the affected member states. Table 17 illustrates how respondents perceived the roles of the United Nations in post-war recovery and reconstruction in Liberia and Sierra Leone. In the former case, a far greater number of respondents reported that the UN played either a ‘weak’ role (65 per cent) or had ‘no involvement at all’ (18 per cent), compared to the 7 per cent and 10 per cent that indicated that the UN played ‘excellent’ and ‘very good’ roles, respectively. In Sierra Leone, however, much more respondents reported that the UN played an ‘excellent’ role (40 per cent) and ‘very good’ role (50 per cent). Only 12 per cent believed that the UN played a ‘weak’ role in Sierra Leone, while none of the 120 respondents in that country indicated that the UN was not at all involved. In cumulative terms, there is a better appreciation of the UN’s role in the post-war reconstruction efforts embarked upon by the government in Sierra Leone than in Liberia.

Table 17: Perceptions of the Role of the United Nations in Post-war Reconstruction in Liberia and Sierra Leone

Categories	Liberia		Sierra Leone		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Excellent	7	7.0	48	40.0	55	25.0
Very Good	10	10.0	60	50.0	70	31.8
Weak	65	65.0	12	10.0	77	35.0
No Involvement at all	18	18.0	0	0	18	8.2
Total	100	100.0	120	100.0	220	100.0

This understanding of the role of the UN in post-war reconstruction is supported by the general perception of the role of the international community in the same enterprise. In Liberia, only 2 per cent and 9 per cent of respondents indicated that the international community played 'excellent' and 'very good' roles, respectively, while 73 per cent and 16 per cent reported that the international community played a 'weak' role or had 'no involvement at all' in their country (see Table 18). In Sierra Leone, however, 13.3 per cent of respondents reported that the international community played an 'excellent' role and 73.3 per cent indicated a 'very good' role, while only 13.3 per cent indicated that the international community is 'weak'. Again, it is instructive that none of the respondents mentioned that the international community played "no role at all" in the post-war reconstruction effort in Sierra Leone.

Table 18: Perceptions of the Role of the International Community in Post-war Reconstruction in Liberia and Sierra Leone

Categories	Liberia		Sierra Leone		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Excellent	2	2.0	16	13.3	18	8.18
Very Good	9	9.0	88	73.3	97	44.0
Weak	73	73.0	16	13.3	89	40.5
No Involvement at all	16	16.0	-	-	16	7.27
Total	100	100.0	120	100.0	220	100.0

6

Conclusion

This study investigated how the nature and character of a post-war regime can influence or affect the direction, pace and quality of peace building, reconstruction and national reconciliation. National and cross-national comparative insights were drawn from the experiences of two West African countries, Liberia and Sierra Leone, which suffered atrocious civil wars for much of the 1990s. In the case of the former, a relapse occurred between 2000 and 2003, after an initial interregnum, during the turbulent presidency of Charles Taylor. The study revealed that even though the two countries have strikingly similar historical and contemporary political experiences, they went in different directions in terms of identifying, prioritizing and addressing the myriad problems that confronted them after the cessation of their civil wars. The different paths they followed were due, in several respects, to the different regime types the two countries inherited in the post-war era. While Sierra Leone succeeded in putting in place a leadership (and personality) under President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, which had absolutely nothing to do with the wanton massacres and destructions committed during the civil war, across the border in Liberia, Charles Taylor was the *dramatis persona* at the heart of the conflict. Eventually, the personalities of the two men defined the national and international attitudes and responses to post-war reconstruction programmes.

In the case of Sierra Leone, Kabbah's government was able to win immense domestic and international goodwill that, in turn, created a lot of enthusiasm and support for the tasks of post-war reconstruction. More than anything else, the unprecedented international mentorship of, and support for, the government and post-war agenda of Sierra Leone, including the largest presence of United Nations personnel then, were due to the background, reputation, commitment and perceived vision of their president, Tejan Kabbah. The inevitable conclusion from the data is that although many factors were responsible for the strong international support given to Sierra Leone's post-war reconstruction programme under the leadership of Tejan Kabbah, the nature of the government, its perceived democratic credentials, and the perception of the President as a committed democrat were very crucial to the progress made during his administration's

tenure. Nevertheless, by the time he left office after the general elections held in August 2007, there were still many important areas and issues to be addressed by government before the benefits of post-war reconstruction could meaningfully trickle down to the ordinary man and women in the country, and that would obviously take some time. The lingering obstacles to genuine national reconciliation and to post-war reconstruction in Sierra-Leone, in that regard, are many and include: shortage of funds, creeping donor fatigue; the wilting credibility of government, insincerity and waning commitment both by government and implementing partners and the difficulties in accessing rural communities due to bad roads and other basic infrastructure. Other constraints include shortage of manpower and requisite expertise, pervasive corruption and the failure by government to appreciate the magnitude of the post-war reconstruction challenges facing the country as a whole.

The study also revealed that Tejan Kabbah's administration faced myriad problems, not the least the acute shortage of local capacity to mobilize domestic resources. Other limitations included the poor sensitization of communities and local authorities on the new governance paradigm, which placed a lot of emphasis—in principle, at least—on transparency, political inclusion and accountability. In order to improve the process and outcomes of post-war reconstruction, especially in the post Tejan Kabbah political dispensation, more emphasis should be placed on establishing a pro-active monitoring system, popular participation, especially by the youth, and more dedication and honesty on the part of the government and its officials, now and in the future, in prosecuting the reconstruction and development agenda. Again, the country's heavy dependence on the international community for financial support to execute its reconstruction programmes will continue to call into serious question both their ownership and sustainability, especially after the inevitable termination of external funding.

Liberia, on the other hand, suffered several mishaps in the design and implementation of its post-war agenda. Indeed, former President Charles Taylor squandered much of the promising opportunities he had to implement purposive and qualitative post-war reconstruction agenda because he pursued vendetta against real or imagined opposition elements and enemies, and created a ruthless and protective cult of personality around himself. By doing so, Taylor alienated different segments of the civil society, while the civil service, the judiciary, the military and other security agencies were at his whim. Finally, the Liberian leader used elements within his erstwhile rebel faction, the NPFL, to foment trouble and destabilize neighbouring countries, especially Sierra Leone, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire. Expectedly, these deliberate acts of vengeance and sabotage, coupled with his insincerity in implementing post-war reconstruction projects, alienated him from his people and eroded the support and goodwill of the international community, which, in consequence, treated him with open contempt, while he was widely perceived by the great powers as a villain.

The events of the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, as well as the different paths the two countries followed in the implementation of their post-war development programmes, point to several important scenarios and concerns. First, there is the clear gap in the crucial inputs and roles that the international community could and should play in order to help weak countries manage their affairs better before, during and after civil wars. Indeed, it was the nature and magnitude of the support received from donors that determined, in the short and long run, the post-conflict fortunes of the two countries. Second, the two civil wars undoubtedly revealed that the processes and stages leading to their outbreak are usually not limited to developments in their domestic environments alone. Third, there are usually wider sub-regional, regional and global dimensions to how civil wars break out, how they fester and how they are eventually concluded, whether effectively or not. It is obvious, for instance, that the two civil wars were intricately linked with, and with much broader ramifications, for events in the Mano River Zone over the last two decades, or so. What this phenomenon would suggest, then, is the need for researchers and policy makers to be conscious of the different dimensions and dynamics of the political, ethnic, and social relationships that cut across each of the member states of the Mano River Basin, in order to understand why and how they are not only affected, but also implicated, in the course of the violent civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Outside the immediate environment of the Mano River Basin are the intricate patterns of relationships and alliances within the wider sub-region of West Africa, and how they influenced the course and even the outcomes of the civil wars. This point is even more important in the context of the mixed reactions to the conflicts by member states of ECOWAS, the sub-regional organization that played such a major role at different stages of the conflicts and in their resolution. While some countries, at least publicly, supported the quest for a peaceful resolution of the two civil wars, others engaged in both visible and clandestine activities to undermine and subvert the sub-regional efforts. There is no doubt that Liberia became a willing victim of this unfortunate situation as Taylor received active assistance from neighbouring governments and groups that shared his ambition, largely for their own selfish purposes. In return, Taylor provided active support to rebel groups in some states in the sub-region, as already pointed out. It is clear that if the material, logistic, operational and political supports were not provided by some countries within the sub-region, and even from far away Libya, Taylor's recalcitrance and defiance of ECOWAS and the international community would not have endured for such a long time.

This conclusion raises the imperative for some kind of discretion and self-control on the part of different regimes, as well as a mechanism for imposing peer sanctions on deviant regimes and countries that aid the destabilization of other countries or engaged in acts that subvert the integrity of neighbouring states.

There are, accordingly, two frameworks that can provide effective bulwarks against rogue regimes and those that support them. One such mechanism is the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, a bold attempt to consolidate peace, security and stability in the sub-region of West Africa, and to redeem the image of the sub-region which was badly battered during the Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil wars. The second framework, at the broader continental level, is the New Partnership for Africa (NEPAD) Peer Review Mechanism, also adopted by the African Union, which proposes regular reviews and assessments of individual member country's policies in order to forestall situations and conditions that could precipitate instability and breach of domestic and sub-regional peace. There is no doubt that if the guiding principles of these two initiatives are upheld and supported by the signatories, they could form a credible basis for self-inspection, opprobrium and decorum, especially by those member countries that have a tendency to pursue or support policies that create tension and unrest locally and in neighbouring countries.

The final point concerns the cumulative effects of the long civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone for civil societies in the two countries, and beyond. It is clear that the two wars have left in their wake a litany of problems that may be difficult to resolve, even in the long run, due to lack of capacity and resources by the successor governments in the two countries. Even in Sierra Leone, where the tasks of post-war reconstruction had the goodwill and active support of the UN and some friendly countries, there is still much to be done in almost all national spheres. This was a particularly pressing problem for Liberia when the interim government was in place for only a limited period, and spent valuable time reaching out to other parties and constituencies that held the keys to a stable and peaceful post-Taylor era. Two years after winning presidential elections in 2005, the government of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is still grappling with the serious challenges and legacies of her predecessors. Much would therefore depend on whether the Liberian people move on to more constructive engagement among themselves, and between their country and key countries and institutions around the world. Ultimately, the most important task is for the governments of the two countries to put their citizens at the centre of whatever post-war peace building agenda is being implemented. After all, that is the only assurance that post-war peace, reconstruction and national reconciliation can take deep roots, be owned and identified with by the people.

Notes

1. Towards the late 1990s, the increasing attention to explaining the atrocious war in Africa, especially in Sierra Leone and the Mano River area informed institutions like the IMF, World Bank and other international development agencies to commission research into the genealogy and taxonomy of civil wars in Africa. Some of the research findings, particularly Collier and Hoeffler's (2001) 'greed and grievance' thesis, co-sponsored by the World Bank and the Institute of Peace Academy (IPA), have been active in focusing attention on the economic agenda and processes in civil wars. This has translated into some policy initiatives connected to cutting the economic catalysts of civil wars. A clear example is the Kimberly Process for certifying diamonds and curbing the illicit flow of blood diamonds from conflict areas.
2. The extant literature on post-war reconstruction in Africa is mainly single-country case studies. For example, over six chapters in an edited volume by the former Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UN/ECA), Adebayo Adedeji, were dedicated to analysing African conflicts using single-country case studies. The only exception to this trend is the Research No. 87 by the International Crisis Group (2004), which expressly looks at post-war reconstruction in Liberia and Sierra Leone in a comparative manner.
3. Commandos reportedly took at least 50 per cent of the DDR grant given to each of the fake adult combatants they used to fill slots that would otherwise have been utilized by child fighters. Interview with Abu J. Conteh, Community Based Reintegration Supervisor, CARITAS Makeni, Freetown, March 7, 2003.
4. The contempt that the Creoles had for politics which they believed was the domain of the so-called up country people came out boldly during the troubled 1960s when the country was going through its first period of political instability. This contempt is exemplified by the popular saying in Freetown: 'Sorie, go fet for you country, Davidson, cam inside', literally meaning, 'Sorie [the country boy] go out and fight for your country, Davidson, [the Creole boy], come inside the house'.
5. The word WHIG means We Hope in God. The Americo-Liberians presented a strong religious façade in their grip over the country. Indigenous Liberians who wanted to climb the social and political ladder had to embrace Christianity, especially the Methodist and Baptist denominations, to have any chance for success.
6. Among the activities of MOJA were small scale cooperative farming, vocational training and adult education classes. Some non-commissioned men in the Liberian armed forces, including Samuel Doe and his colleagues who would later stage the April 1980 coup, attended these classes.
7. This interesting and refreshing insight was provided by Abdel Fatau Musa, Conflict Prevention Adviser, ECOWAS Commission, Abuja, Nigeria, in April 2007.

8. However, Albert Margai, then prime minister, instigated his brother-in-law, Brigadier David Lansana, to stage a coup which led to the flight of Stevens and his supporters to neighbouring Guinea until 1968 when he was reinstated as prime minister after a coup by junior officers in the Sierra Leone army. The action aborted what would have been a historic moment in the country's, and indeed Africa's political development after independence.
9. For many years while in opposition, Siaka Stevens gave the general impression that he was of Creole/Mende background.
10. One of the authors was in sixth form in Freetown and vividly recalled these events.
11. Press interview during Stevens' visit to Nigeria in July 1986.
12. At the time, foreign exchange was dispensed by a committee of three, including Stevens.
13. This is the rather elegant name of the mortuary (morgue) at the Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospital, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.
14. United States Committee for Refugees (USCR), '50 Years Later: Refugee flight on the Rise, International Support Waning'.
15. See *Human Rights Watch*, <http://www.hrw.org/backgrounder/africa/sl.bck0226.htm>
16. For more on this aspect and graphic pictures of amputees, see Pienel Gruppen, August 16, 2000, 'Human Rights Dossier', Radio Netherlands. See also BBC News online, March 10, 2004, (BBCnews.com/sierraleone).
17. Bryant served as chairman of Liberian Action Party (LAP) during the 1997 general elections. The party's performance was miniscule.
18. In the case of iron ore mining, agreements entered by the interim government with the steel giant, ArcelorMittal, have been criticised for significantly short-changing the country and giving the company carte blanche control without responsibility.
19. The UNHCR set the deadline of June 30, 2007, as cut-off date for the end of its support to facilitate voluntary repatriation of Liberian refugees abroad. See *The Analyst*, June 26, 2007
20. See the website: www.cartercenter.org.
21. For instance, former rebel leader of the INPFL, Prince Yommie Johnson, is now a senator in the Liberian upper house, while Edwin Snowe, Taylor's former son-in-law, is speaker of the new parliament, the third most powerful office in the country. See Richard Black, 'New Dawn for Liberia's 'Blood Forest'', BBC News, 2006/10/12.
22. The following political parties are involved: FDP, LERP, LPL, NDPL, PDPL, RAP, TWP and ULD. See *The Analyst*, June 5, 2007.
23. See *The Analyst*, June 25, 2007, 'Mittal Steel to Rehabilitate Buchanan and Yekepa'.
24. See http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/hi/world/africa/country_profile/1043500.stm, May 18, 2007, (accessed June 22, 2007).
25. During a visit to Libya in June 2007, her third since inauguration, Johnson-Sirleaf requested Tripoli's assistance to rehabilitate the Executive Mansion, which was destroyed by fire July 26, 2006, to renovate Ducor Palace Hotel, and to establish a rubber processing plant and construct housing units of different sizes in the country. See *The Analyst*, June 12, 2007.
26. See *The Analyst*, June 26, 2007, 'G8 to Clear Liberia's Debt'.
27. Although Firestone has been operating in Liberia for about eighty years, the transitional government of Gyude Bryant extended the concession, with even more generous tax breaks, for another thirty years. See Bill Law, November 9, 2006, 'Liberia's Foreign Investment Challenge', BBC Radio 4's Crossing Continents broadcast.

28. See BBC News, October 3, 2006, 'Iron Ore Deal Bad for Liberia'.
29. See *The Analyst*, June 12, 2007 'No Transparency, No Open Balance'.
30. For instance, a strike by University of Liberia Faculty Association (ULFA), against non-payment of salary arrears, and a student demonstration for an improved transportation system forced government to shut down the school temporarily. See *The Analyst*, June, 25, 2007 'Not My desire to shut down UL- Ellen'.
31. Many of these grievances have been articulated under the aegis of the Concerned Ex-Combatants Union of Liberia (CECUL) under the chairmanship of Emmanuel Larmine Langatte. See *The Inquirer*, June 1, 2007.
32. Ledgerhood Rennie, September 19, 2006, 'Vigilantes take on Liberian Gangs', BBC News.
33. As part of its assistance to Liberia, the US government has retained the services of an American defence contractor, DynCorp International, to recruit, vet and train 2000 young Liberians for the new Armed Forces of Liberia. See Elizabeth Blunt, 'Liberia Recruits a New Army', BBC News.
34. Ledgerhood Rennie, January 6, 2007, 'Liberia: A Year of Slow Progress', BBC News; See also, Republic of Liberia, National Budget: Repositioning for National Renewal, Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development, July 1, 2007- June 30, 2008. In www.emansion.gov.lr/doc/FY200708Budget.summary.pdf
35. Address by His Excellency, Alhaji Ahmed Tejan Kabbah on the occasion of his swearing-in as president of the Republic of Sierra Leone at Parliament on March 29, 1996, p.3.
36. Presidential address by His Excellency Alhaji Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, to Parliament on May 22, 1998, p. 4.
37. Programme Support Document for Peace, Reconciliation and Reconstruction in Sierra Leone (SIL /97/006A/ 01/31).
38. National Strategy for Good Governance and Public Service Reform, 1997, p. 53.
39. Draft Decentralization and Local Government Policy Paper for the Republic of Sierra Leone, September 2003, p. 8.
40. Presidential address by His Excellency Alhaji Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, at the State Opening of Parliament on May 22, 1998.
41. See the website: <http://www.sierra-leone.org/specialcourtstatute.html>
42. Discussion at the West African Network to Stop Child Soldiers Seminar, 'Advancing Human Security in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone: Challenges and Prospects', Freetown, March 21, 2006.
43. *The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone*, Vol. 2. See the SLTRC website: www.trcsierraleone.org/drwebsite/publish/index.html
44. Adama Kamara, A Female Victim, Testimony to the Commission and answering the Chairman's questions, in *The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone*, Vol. 2. See the SLTRC website: www.trcsierraleone.org/drwebsite/publish/index.html.
45. Ibid.
46. BBC Focus on Africa, May 2, 2004.
47. Gilbrilla Dumbuya, a victim, answering questions from the TRC Chairman at a public session in the Northern District of Moyamba. Quoted in TRC Final Report, Volume 2, Chapter 4: op. cit.

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Amadu Sesay is a Professor of International Relations at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

Charles Ukeje is a Reader in International Relations at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

Osman Gbla holds a doctorate from Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone, where he also served as Head of the Department of Political Science and Acting Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law.

Olawale Ismail is currently a Research Associate of the Project on Youth Vulnerability and Exclusion in Africa with the Conflict, Security and Development Group, International Policy Institute at King's College, London, UK.

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